SOUTH CAROLINA PRESS ASSOCIATION

NEWS CONTEST
2026 RULES

Entry Deadline: Dec. 4, 2026

scnewscontest.com

Recognizing the best journalism in South Carolina

QUICK GUIDE TO CATEGORIES

REPORTING/WRITING

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GENERAL

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CONTEST DEADLINE | Friday, Dec. 4, 2026

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

CONTEST DIVISIONS | Competition will take place in six divisions:

- **DIVISION A:** Large daily newspapers and Division A online publications
- **DIVISION B:** Mid-size daily newspapers
- **DIVISION C:** Small daily newspapers
- **DIVISION D:** Large weekly and monthly newspapers and Division D online publications
- **DIVISION E:** Mid-size weekly and monthly newspapers
- **DIVISION F:** Small weekly and monthly newspapers

Your division will auto-fill in the digital contest platform after you select your news organization. Visit scpress.org/news-contest to view active members by division, as well as how each division is determined. News organizations are allowed to compete in a larger division. If you are interested, contact SCPA before submitting entries.

SCNEWSCONTEST.COM | Each editor will be given a username and password for scnewscontest.com. If you are the editor of multiple news organizations, you can submit entries for all of your news organizations using this same log-in information. An editor is welcome to share their log-in info with staffers so they can upload their entries.

ELIGIBILITY | Full-time or part-time regular employees of newspapers and online publications, or regular contributors or freelancers to active organizations that were members of the SCPA during the contest period are eligible to enter. A contestant must have been a regular employee or contributor during the period the entry was published. Contestants may enter regardless of physical location, i.e. out-of-state design centers are eligible. Organizations that became members of SCPA during the contest period may submit contest entries published after their application date. **All entries must have been published in a member's print or digital edition, specialty publication (including special sections, magazines and other print products produced by newspaper) or on a website, app, social media page or personal social media account associated with news organization.**

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. **Unless otherwise specified, no individual entry may be entered in more than one contest**, with the exception that all or part of any entry in the following contests may be entered in any other category as an individual entry:

- (1) Judson Chapman Award
- (2) Jim Davenport Award for Excellence in Government Reporting
- (6) Montgomery/Shurr FOI Award
- (7) Jay Bender Award for Assertive Journalism
- (8) Journalist of the Year
- (9) Photojournalist of the Year
- (10) Election/Political Coverage
- (11) Editorial or Column in Support of FOI/Open Government Issues
- (25) Center for Integrity in News Reporting Award of Excellence
- (36) Community Service
- (44) Lede
- (62) Photo Series or Photo Story

Only one story from each beat reporting contest (14, 15, 16, 31, 32, 33, 34 and 35), (26) Breaking News Reporting, (28) Reporting-in-Depth, (29) Investigative Reporting and (30) Series of Articles may be entered in any other contest. Articles, photos, etc., that are encompassed in an entry submitted for a dissimilar category shall be eligible for submission as an individual entry in a separate category. **If you enter in more than one category where not allowed by the rules, SCPA will determine which category the entry should compete and disqualify the other entries. Your entry fees will not be returned.**

PORTFOLIO/BEAT REPORTING CONTESTS | An individual may only submit one entry in each of the portfolio/beat reporting contests listed below. If an individual works for multiple news organizations, they may only submit one portfolio. If the portfolio contains work from multiple news organizations, the entrant must submit the entry in the highest division. If the entry wins and it contains work from more than one news organization, President's Cup points will be split accordingly.

- (3) Cartoon
- (12) Editorial Writing
- (13) Review Portfolio
- (14) Health Beat Reporting
- (15) Faith Beat Reporting
- (16) Sports Beat Reporting (one entry per beat)
- (17) News Headline Writing
- (18) Feature Headline Writing
- (19) Sports Headline Writing
- (31) Beat Reporting (one entry per beat)
- (32) Government Beat Reporting (one entry per beat)
- (33) Business Beat Reporting (one entry per beat)
- (34) Growth and Development Beat Reporting
- (35) Education Beat Reporting
- (45) Column Writing
- (46) Humor Column Writing
- (50) Sports Column Writing

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

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

GROUP PUBLICATIONS | Groups that produce an item for multiple publications within their group may enter the item only once by the news organization in which the item originated. You may not enter the same item more than once under multiple flags.

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. **Unless otherwise specified, no individual entry may be entered in more than one contest. If you enter in more than one category where not allowed by the rules, SCPA will determine which category the entry should compete and disqualify the other entries. Your entry fee(s) will not be returned.**

ENTRY FEES/PAYMENT | Each entry is $9. On the Entry Report page, you will see a breakdown of all of the entries that are being submitted for your news organization. No total entry fees will be displayed. Instead, SCPA will ensure that all of your entries are correct and contact the editor with an invoice that can be paid by check or online by credit card.

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 March 12, 2027, at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center in downtown Columbia.

FILE TYPES ACCEPTED

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

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, please mark the headlines and jumps in Adobe Acrobat with an arrow or box.

YOUR WEBSITE'S PAYWALL | If you are submitting a URL and your site has a paywall, you must include a username and password for the judges that will work Dec. 2026 – March 2027.

BEST OF THE BEST | First place winners from each division will compete for a Best of the Best award in the following contests:

- (26) Breaking News Reporting
- (27) Enterprise Reporting
- (28) Reporting-in-Depth and (30) Series of Articles combined
- (37) News Feature Writing
- (45) Column Writing
- (47) Spot Sports Story and (49) Sports Feature Story combined
- (51) Page One Design, (52) Feature Page Design and (53) Sports Page Design combined
- (56) Spot News Photo and (57) General News Photo combined
- (58) Feature Photo
- (59) Sports Action Photo and (60) Sports Feature Photo combined

A Best of the Best plaque will replace the winner's first place plaque. There is no fee for this competition; winners are automatically entered by SCPA. Winners will not be announced until the Annual Meeting.

PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE (SWEEPSTAKES AWARD) | A silver trophy will be given for one year to the member newspaper in each division that scores the highest number of points in its division. Three points will be given for each first place award, two points for each second place and one point for each third place award. (2) Jim Davenport Award for Excellence in Government Reporting, (6) Montgomery/Shurr FOI Award, (7) Jay Bender Award for Assertive Journalism, (8) Journalist of the Year, (9) Photojournalist of the Year, A-Mark Prize for Investigative Journalism, (25) Center for Integrity in News Reporting Award of Excellence, Ken Baldwin Award for Excellence in Business Journalism, (70) General Excellence: Digital and (71) General Excellence: Print points do not count towards President's Award points. If there is a tie, the news organization with the most first place awards will win the President's Award.

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

HOW TO ENTER

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

2 | Login at scnewscontest.com. You will see a page showing any entries you have already submitted. Complete rules for the contest are available above. Some browsers, such as Safari, will open the rules in a new window; others will require you to download the PDF file to your computer. **Do not use incognito/private mode to access the digital entry platform as it affects the functionality of the site. Recommended browsers include Chrome and Firefox.**

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

4 | On this page, select your news organization name. A lot of information, including division, will autofill. If the information is incorrect, 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 | Select the Newspaper Group from the drop-down menu for the contest you are entering. You must select Open, All Daily, All Weekly or Contests By Division.

6 | Select the contest category from the drop-down menu. When you select the category, special instructions will appear below it. If you don't see the category you're looking to enter, make sure you've selected the correct Newspaper Group (See Step 5). 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.

8 | Include the name of the person(s) who should be credited for any award. This is generally the writer, photographer, designer, etc.

9 | Add your file(s) and/or enter URL(s). You can drag and drop files or use the "Add files" button to navigate to your files. Upload as many files as necessary to complete your entry but refer to the special instructions for any limitations. If you are submitting URL(s), enter each URL in a separate box. If you are entering more than five URLs on a single entry, do not use the entry form boxes. Instead, copy and paste the URLs into a Word document and upload the document. If your URL is too long to enter in the online platform, use bit.ly or a URL shortener. If you need help shortening your URLs, contact SCPA.

10 | WHEN YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR SUBMISSION, CLICK THE "SAVE" BUTTON. If you click the "Back to list" button, you will lose the entry you just completed. After clicking "Save," you will be directed back to the list of your entries.

11 | To submit another entry, click "Add New Entry." As long as you have not logged out of the system, your news organization's name will still be in place and you can simply start at Step 5 again. You may log out and log back in later to continue adding entries. You will need to select your news organization's name each time you log in.

12 | If you are finished submitting entries, please review the list. Click Entry Report for full listing of entries submitted. No total fee will be displayed. Instead, SCPA will ensure all your entries are correct and contact the editor with an invoice that can be paid by check or online by credit card. *Please note that while SCPA staffers will work as quickly as possible to sort and bill you, we cannot ensure that you will be invoiced by Dec. 31, 2026.*

PDF INSTRUCTIONS

EXTRACT PAGES | If your entry is part of a multi-page PDF, open the PDF with Acrobat and go to "Document" menu. Select "Extract Pages" and follow the directions. Eliminate all pages that are not part of your entry. Save the new PDF.

COMBINE MULTIPLE PDFS INTO ONE | EACH ENTRY SHOULD CONSIST OF ONE SINGLE PDF FILE WHENEVER POSSIBLE. If a category calls for more than one piece or you have page jumps, combine the PDFs into a single file. In 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 | In Acrobat, mark your entry with an arrow, box or highlighter so judges will know what to judge.

MAKE PDF FILES 100 MB OR SMALLER | Reducing 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.

DON'T HAVE ACROBAT? | If you can't edit PDFs because you don't have Acrobat, contact SCPA. We will work with you!

OPEN DIVISION

Open division contests are open to all SCPA active members.

1. JUDSON CHAPMAN AWARD | This award is for the best **single story** in support of a cause or benefit of concern to the community. Effectiveness in presenting the cause and quality of writing shall be the criteria for judging. Editors are encouraged to include a letter to the judges explaining the circumstances of the story. The award is named for Judson Chapman, the late general manager of *The Greenville News-Piedmont*. Each Judson Chapman Award entry may be entered in one other writing contest. Please submit broader community service efforts in (36) Community Service.
Submit: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL to story. Enter the story's headline into the Title/Cutline box. If you are submitting a letter of explanation, upload it as a PDF file.

2. JIM DAVENPORT AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN GOVERNMENT REPORTING | This award is named in memory of the late Jim Davenport, a tenacious reporter, who was known for his fair and aggressive coverage of state government and political matters. During his 13 years with The Associated Press, Davenport cultivated sources because those he covered respected his ethics, his compassion, his tireless work ethic and his desire to hold those in power accountable for their actions. Endowed by the AP's Meg Kinnard because of Davenport's profound influence on her career, the first place winner in this contest will be awarded a $1,000 cash prize. The gift, given as an endowment to the S.C. Press Association Foundation, will enable the award to be presented for years to come. Kinnard said this was necessary to ensure that Davenport's legacy lives on, even when those who personally knew him are no longer around. This award will be presented to an individual journalist who regularly covers state, federal and/or local government topics in South Carolina. No staff/multiple byline entries will be allowed. Criteria include enterprise, writing quality and effectiveness in explaining state, local and/or federal government matters, as well as holding public officials and elected leaders accountable. In addition to reviewing samples of work, judges will evaluate how each nominee demonstrates fair, ethical and aggressive reporting. Self-nominations will not be allowed. Nominations may be made by the editor of the nominee's news organization or by an editor or reporter from another SCPA member organization if they deem a colleague worthy of this honor. A nomination letter must be submitted outlining how the nominee embodies Davenport's style of nonpartisan, unbiased and ethical journalism. The contest shall be judged by a committee of former S.C. journalists and a representative of The Associated Press. Only first place shall be awarded. However, other reporters may be honored at the discretion of the judges. If possible, the award will be presented by a member of Davenport's family. Entries in this contest may be entered in other contests. There is no limit on the number of journalists at each news organization who can be nominated for this honor.
Submit: Enter URLs and/or upload full-page PDFs. Upload letter of nomination as a PDF file. If you are nominating a colleague who does not work at your news organization, contact SCPA for details on how to submit the nomination in the digital contest platform.

3. CARTOON | This contest is for the best editorial cartoon. A single entry shall consist of three cartoons by an individual. **No staff/multiple byline entries will be allowed**. **AN INDIVIDUAL MAY SUBMIT ONLY ONE ENTRY IN THIS CATEGORY.** A letter of explanation is encouraged to accompany local issue cartoons.
Submit: Upload three cartoons as high-res JPG images, full-page PDF files or URL(s). Enter cartoon titles in Title/Cutline box. If you are submitting a letter of explanation, upload it as a PDF file.

4. INFORMATIONAL GRAPHIC | This contest is for best single informational graphic. Entry can be a graph, chart, map or other infographic produced by a staff member and used to convey information in a succinct manner. Criteria include creativity, effectiveness, clarity of information and accuracy.
Submit: Upload graphic as JPG image or full-page PDF, or submit URL to graphic. Enter title in Title/Cutline box.

5. INNOVATION | Entries in this contest are any action, publication, project, event, digital advancement or other innovative thing that your news department has created/implemented to engage, inform and/or impact your readers and community. Entries must be accompanied by a letter to the judges explaining the concept, purpose and impact.
Submit: Upload full-page PDF(s) and/or submit URL(s). Enter the project name into the Title/Cutline box. Letter of explanation must be uploaded as a PDF file.

ALL DAILY & ALL WEEKLY DIVISIONS

These categories are open to all daily divisions (A, B, C) and all weekly/monthly divisions (D, E, F). Unless otherwise noted 1st, 2nd & 3rd place awards will be given among all dailies, as well as all weeklies.

6. MONTGOMERY/SHURR FOI AWARD | This award is named in memory of Reid Montgomery, the late secretary-manager of SCPA, and the late John Shurr, who spent more than two decades as FOI Chair of SCPA and as S.C. Bureau Chief for The Associated Press. Both led the fight for open government in South Carolina. Criteria include articles, editorials and supporting materials that demonstrate how the news organization exercised unusual diligence and/or courage in furthering access to public information, as defined by the S.C. Freedom of Information Act. One or more topics may be included. A letter of nomination must accompany the entry. Consideration will be given to possible legal precedents set and other actions taken to further the cause of FOI in South Carolina, to include but not limited to: court action, correspondence with public officials, etc. The editor or their designee may make nominations. The contest shall be judged by a committee of former S.C. journalists. Only first place shall be awarded. However, other news organizations may be honored at the discretion of the judges. **EACH NEWS ORGANIZATION MAY SUBMIT ONLY ONE ENTRY IN THIS CONTEST.** Collaborative projects may be submitted from a collective group of news organizations on behalf of the collective; contact SCPA for how to enter a collaborative project. Entries in this contest may be entered in other contests.
Submit: Enter URLs and/or upload full-page PDFs. Upload letter of nomination as a PDF file.

7. JAY BENDER AWARD FOR ASSERTIVE JOURNALISM | This award recognizes the individual journalist or news organization who stands up to authority in the public's interest. Endowed by SCPA Attorney Jay Bender, the first place winner in the daily and weekly divisions will be awarded a $250 cash prize. This award will recognize an act or actions taken in the news contest period demonstrating assertiveness in the gathering and dissemination of news in the face of opposition by those in positions of authority. The guiding principle will be that journalists with boldness do the things to get the news that others are reluctant to do. A letter of nomination must accompany the entry. The nomination can be made on behalf of someone or by self-nomination. This contest will be judged by a committee of former S.C. journalists, who during their careers have demonstrated their possession of journalistic boldness. Entries in this contest may be entered in other contests. If there is an FOI component in this entry, you may also enter it into (6) Montgomery/Shurr FOI Award.
Submit: Enter URLs and/or upload full-page PDFs. Upload letter of nomination as a PDF file.

8. JOURNALIST OF THE YEAR | This competition is open to any regular employee of the news department of a news organization. Criteria include the quality of the journalist's published work and actions demonstrating significant impact on their community, their news organization or the newspaper industry. Nomination shall be made by the editor or publisher of the nominee's news organization or their designee. The nomination shall consist of a letter outlining the nominee's contributions to journalism and samples of the nominee's work, if appropriate. **EACH NEWS ORGANIZATION IS LIMITED TO ONE ENTRY.** Only first place shall be awarded.
Submit: Enter URLs and/or upload full-page PDFs. Upload letter of nomination as a PDF file.

9. PHOTOJOURNALIST OF THE YEAR | An entry shall consist of 10 published single photographs and one photo story containing up to 14 images. **A maximum of 24 photographs may be submitted.** Criteria include photo quality, creativity, relevance, ability to communicate subject, impact of photos and editing. This award is for the body of work, not an individual photo. Photos entered in this contest may be entered into any other category. There is no limit on the number of photographers at each news organization who can enter. Only first place shall be awarded.
Submit: Upload ten single high-res images as JPG files. For the photo story, you may upload high-res JPG files or submit a URL to a gallery online. Type the cutlines in the Title/Cutline box.

10. ELECTION/POLITICAL COVERAGE | This award is for the best election and political coverage for local, state and national races. **This contest is for the body of work and will be awarded to the news organization, not an individual staffer. EACH NEWS ORGANIZATION MAY SUBMIT ONLY ONE ENTRY IN THIS CONTEST.** One or more topics may be included in the entry. Criteria include original reporting, commentary and supporting materials that demonstrate how the news organization exercised unusual diligence and/or courage in informing readers. Entries in this contest should go beyond a single article or election special section. A letter of explanation should accompany the entry. Entries in this contest may be entered in other contests.
Submit: Upload all full-page PDFs or submit URLs to each story/page. If you are submitting a letter of explanation, upload it as a PDF file.

11. EDITORIAL OR COLUMN IN SUPPORT OF FOI/OPEN GOVERNMENT ISSUES | This award is for the best single editorial or column in support of Freedom of Information/open government issues. Criteria include quality of writing and effectiveness of explaining FOI/open government matters to readers. This contest shall be judged by a committee of former S.C. journalists. Entries in this contest may be entered in other contests.
Submit: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL. Enter the headline into the Title/Cutline box.

12. EDITORIAL WRITING | Each entry will consist of three editorials written by an individual writer or news organization staff. **If submitting as staff, each news organization is limited to one entry. If submitting as an individual writer, the individual may submit only one entry.** Criteria include significance of subject, timeliness and quality of writing. This award is for the body of work, not an individual editorial. In the daily division, the editorial writing award is named in honor of the late E. A. "Ned" Ramsaur, publisher of *The Greenville News-Piedmont*. A first place cash prize of $150, sponsored by *The Greenville News,* will be awarded.
Submit: Upload full-page PDFs or submit URL to each editorial. Enter each editorial's headline into the Title/Cutline box.

13. REVIEW PORTFOLIO | This award is given to the writer submitting the best examples of critical writing, to include such subjects as literature, architecture, restaurants, art, theater, film and music. Each entry shall consist of three examples by the same writer. **No staff/multiple byline entries will be allowed**. **AN INDIVIDUAL MAY SUBMIT ONLY ONE ENTRY IN THIS CATEGORY.** This award is for the body of work, not an individual review.
Submit: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL to each article. Enter each review's headline into the Title/Cutline box.

14. HEALTH BEAT REPORTING | Each entry shall consist of three articles by a SINGLE writer on health topics. No staff/multiple byline entries will be allowed. Criteria include enterprise, writing quality and effectiveness in explaining health matters. This award is for the body of work, not an individual story. **AN INDIVIDUAL REPORTER MAY SUBMIT ONLY ONE ENTRY.** One story from this entry may be entered in any other contest.
Submit: Upload all full-page PDFs or submit URL to each story. Enter the beat topic into the Title/Cutline box.

15. FAITH BEAT REPORTING | Each entry shall consist of three articles by a SINGLE writer on faith/spirituality/religion topics. No staff/multiple byline entries will be allowed. Criteria include enterprise, writing quality and effectiveness in explaining matters of faith. This award is for the body of work, not an individual story. **AN INDIVIDUAL REPORTER MAY SUBMIT ONLY ONE ENTRY.** One story from this entry may be entered in any other contest.
Submit: Upload all full-page PDFs or submit URL to each story. Enter the beat topic into the Title/Cutline box.

16. SPORTS BEAT REPORTING | Each entry shall consist of three articles on sports topics by a SINGLE writer. No staff/multiple byline entries will be allowed. Criteria include enterprise, writing quality and effectiveness in explaining sports issues. This award is for the body of work, not an individual story. **AN INDIVIDUAL REPORTER MAY SUBMIT ONLY ONE ENTRY PER BEAT COVERED.** One story from each entry may be entered in any other contest.
Submit: Upload all full-page PDFs or submit URL to each story. Enter the beat topic into the Title/Cutline box.

17. NEWS HEADLINE WRITING | An entry shall consist of three news headlines written by an individual or news organization staff. **If submitting as staff, each news organization is limited to one entry. If submitting as an individual, the individual may submit only one entry.** Criteria include accuracy, clarity, imagination (cleverness) and appropriateness to a news story.
Submit: Upload full-page PDFs or submit URLs to headlines. Enter headlines into the Title/Cutline box.

18. FEATURE HEADLINE WRITING | An entry shall consist of three feature headlines written by written by an individual or news organization staff. **If submitting as staff, each news organization is limited to one entry. If submitting as an individual, the individual may submit only one entry.** Criteria include accuracy, clarity, imagination (cleverness) and appropriateness to a feature story.
Submit: Upload full-page PDFs or submit URLs to headlines. Enter headlines into the Title/Cutline box.

19. SPORTS HEADLINE WRITING | An entry shall consist of three sports headlines written by an individual or news organization staff. **If submitting as staff, each news organization is limited to one entry. If submitting as an individual, the individual may submit only one entry.** Criteria include accuracy, clarity, imagination (cleverness) and appropriateness to a sports story.
Submit: Upload full-page PDFs or submit URLs to headlines. Enter headlines into the Title/Cutline box.

20. NEWS SECTION OR SPECIAL EDITION | This contest is for a single staff-produced news section or special edition. Criteria include concept, appearance, writing quality, extent of coverage and timeliness. "Progress editions" should be entered in this contest. There is no limit on the number of entries you may submit in this contest, but each edition must be submitted as an individual entry.
Submit: Upload all full-page PDFs from the section or submit URL to e-edition viewer. Enter the section title into the Title/Cutline box.

21. SPORTS SECTION OR MAGAZINE | This contest is for a single staff-produced sports section, special sports edition or sports magazine. Criteria include content, concept, appearance, writing quality, extent of coverage and timeliness. There is no limit on the number of entries you may submit in this contest, but each edition must be submitted as an individual entry.
Submit: Upload all full-page PDFs from the section or submit URL to e-edition viewer. Enter the section title into the Title/Cutline box.

22. FEATURE SECTION OR MAGAZINE | This contest is for a single staff-produced lifestyle/feature/entertainment section, special edition or magazine. Criteria include content, concept, appearance, writing quality and extent of coverage. There is no limit on the number of entries you may submit in this contest, but each edition must be submitted as an individual entry.
Submit: Upload all full-page PDFs from the section or submit URL to e-edition viewer. Enter the section title into the Title/Cutline box.

23. MIXED MEDIA ILLUSTRATION | This contest is for the best single illustration in which elements are manipulated by an artist or photographer, and can include, but are not limited to, the use of illustrations, clip art, Photoshop, photographs and images. Photo illustrations may be entered into this contest.
Submit: Upload one full-page PDF, high-res JPG image or URL. Enter illustration title in Title/Cutline box.

24. DIGITAL PROJECT | This contest is for a single stand-alone, cohesive, staff-produced digital project on a single news, feature or sports topic. Emphasis in this category should be on the use of engaging digital content including storytelling and multimedia features. Longform pieces and larger projects may be submitted. Individual videos should be entered into contests 66, 67 and 68. Podcasts may be entered into this contest. A short letter explaining your project should be submitted. Any part of this entry may also be submitted in other contests.
Submit: Enter the URL to your project. Upload your letter of explanation as a PDF file.

CONTESTS BY DIVISION

The following categories will be judged by division.

25. CENTER FOR INTEGRITY IN NEWS REPORTING AWARD OF EXCELLENCE – SOUTH CAROLINA | *Sponsored by the Center for Integrity in News Reporting* | The Center for Integrity in News Reporting Award of Excellence – South Carolina recognizes news reporting based on verifiable facts, balanced perspectives, neutral tone/language, transparency and thoroughness of sourcing, while excluding opinion and emotional appeals. Entries may include one reported news story or a full series by the same reporter or reporting team on a single topic. Judging criteria:

- **Accuracy and fact-checking**
  - All factual claims should be supported by evidence.
  - Information has been verified through multiple independent and reliable sources.
- **Balance and multiple perspectives**
  - On controversial or complex issues, the report should present multiple viewpoints without favoring one over the other.
  - The amount of attention given to different sides should be proportional to the weight of the issue.
- **Neutral language and tone**
  - The language used should be objective and informative, not sensationalized, or emotionally charged.
  - The report should avoid loaded adjectives, adverbs, or framing that tell the reader how to interpret the facts or feelings.
- **Sourcing and transparency** – Reporters should clearly identify their sources, ideally with verifiable details (e.g., name, position, institution) rather than vague references like "leading doctors say."
- **Separation of news and opinion** – The entry must be a straight news report and not an editorial, opinion piece, or column.
- **Completeness and context**
  - The entry should provide enough context and background information for the audience to understand the broader implications of the story.
  - It should cover "the whole story," not just the parts of a story that support a particular narrative.

A first-place winner will be selected in each division and the winner will receive an engraved plaque. The first-place winners from each division will compete for the overall statewide winner, the recipient of the CFINR Award of Excellence, including a $5,000 cash prize. The $5,000 prize will be awarded directly to the reporter(s), not the news organization. This contest shall be judged by a committee of former S.C. journalists and journalism instructors. Division winners and the overall statewide winner and recipient of the cash prize will be announced by a representative of CFINR or SCPA at the S.C. Press Association Annual Meeting & Awards Presentation on March 12, 2027. Entries in this contest may be entered in other contests. There is no limit on the number of entries you may submit in this contest, but each story or series must be submitted as an individual entry.
Submit: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL(s) to article(s). Enter the story's headline or topic into the Title/Cutline box.

26. BREAKING NEWS REPORTING | Each entry shall consist of breaking news coverage on a single topic, and may include multiple stories, sidebars and URLs/screenshots of real-time digital and social media posts. Video may be included as part of your coverage. A breaking news story may break over an extended period of time and is not limited to one print edition or single 24-hour news cycle. However, this contest stresses breaking news developments over in-depth or enterprise reporting. Exclusive stories that a news organization breaks should be entered into (27) Enterprise Reporting or (28) Reporting-in-Depth. Entries may be accompanied by a brief letter of explanation describing the circumstances under which the reporting occurred. Criteria include writing quality and thoroughness of coverage of an unplanned news event, taking into account difficulties overcome in reporting a breaking news story. One story from this entry may be entered into any other contest.
Submit: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit a URL to each article/digital component. If you have screenshots, they should be uploaded as JPG files. If you are submitting a letter of explanation, upload it as a PDF file. Enter the headline/coverage topic into the Title/Cutline box.

27. ENTERPRISE REPORTING | Each entry shall consist of a single news enterprise reporting article. Judging criteria emphasizes initiative or enterprise reporting, writing quality and thoroughness. Sidebar material may be included, including video. Editors are encouraged to submit a short letter illustrating reporter's enterprise. The category is distinguished from (26) Breaking News Reporting in that deadline pressure is not relevant, although timeliness certainly is a factor. This differs from (29) Investigative Reporting in that this contest is limited to a single story. Enter sports enterprise articles into (48) Sports Enterprise Reporting.
Submit: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL to story. Enter the story's headline into the Title/Cutline box. If you are submitting a letter of explanation, upload it as a PDF file.

28. REPORTING-IN-DEPTH | Entries may consist of a single article or multiple articles on a single subject. Criteria include significance of the subject matter, writing quality and thoroughness. Video may be included as part of your coverage. Judges should evaluate the comprehensive coverage of a single subject that goes beyond routine reporting and demonstrates resourcefulness, innovative approaches and clarity. Designated news series should be entered into (30) Series of Articles, not this contest. Investigative reporting stories should be entered in to (29) Investigative Reporting, not this contest. Entries in (29) Investigative Reporting should display higher standards of research and investigation than this contest. If submitting multiple articles, one story from this entry may be entered into any other contest.
Submit: Upload all full-page PDFs or submit URL(s) to article(s). You can also upload your series to an e-edition viewer and share a URL to the package. Enter the headline or topic into the Title/Cutline box.

29. INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING | This contest recognizes an investigative story or series by a reporter or team of reporters on a single topic. Entries may include a single investigative story or multiple stories over a period of time. Entries should display original reporting revealing information otherwise not generally known that individuals, governmental agencies, businesses, elected officials or organizations do not want under public scrutiny. Judging criteria include depth of research, initiative, obstacles overcome, use of databases and public records, analysis of documents and records, use of multiple sources and impact on public policy. **Entries must include a brief letter of explanation describing the actual or potential impact of the report.** Video may be included as part of your coverage. This differs from (27) Enterprise Reporting in that it is not limited to a single story. This contest is similar to (28) Reporting-in-Depth, but this contest requires higher standards of research and investigation. Entries in this contest may **not** also be entered in (27) Enterprise Reporting, (28) Reporting-in-Depth or (30) Series of Articles, but one story from this entry may be entered into any other contest.
Submit: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL(s) to article(s). Enter the story's headline or topic into the Title/Cutline box. Letter of explanation must be uploaded as a PDF file.

A-MARK PRIZE FOR INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM IN SOUTH CAROLINA | ***Sponsored by the A-Mark Foundation***
Investigative reporters are trained to follow the money, but it takes resources to follow the money. That's why the South Carolina Press Association and the A-Mark Foundation have created a $15,000 cash prize for S.C. reporters and their newsrooms.

- First place: $5,000 for the journalist(s) and $2,500 to the news organization
- Second place: $3,000 for the journalist(s) and $1,500 to the news organization
- Third place: $2,000 for the journalist(s) and $1,000 to the news organization

This contest is open to all news media organizations based in South Carolina and their staff members to include newspapers, broadcast outlets and online news publications.
How SCPA members can compete: First, second and third place winners from all divisions of (29) Investigative Reporting will compete alongside SCBA member entries for the A-Mark Prize for Investigative Journalism in South Carolina. There is no additional fee for SCPA members to enter this competition; (29) Investigative Reporting division winners will be automatically entered by SCPA. Winners will not be announced until the Annual Meeting.

30. SERIES OF ARTICLES | Each entry shall consist of two or more articles on a single subject, **PLANNED AND DESIGNATED AS A SERIES**. Designated news series must be entered in this contest, not (28) Reporting-in-Depth. Criteria shall include importance of subject, extent of coverage, writing quality and effectiveness of presentation. Video may be included as part of your coverage. One story from each entry may be entered in any other contest.
Submit: Upload all full-page PDFs or submit a URL to each story. You can also upload your series to an e-edition viewer and share a URL to the package. Enter the series title into the Title/Cutline box.

31. BEAT REPORTING | Each entry shall consist of three articles by a SINGLE writer on a specific news beat. No staff/multiple byline entries will be allowed. Judging will be based on quality and thoroughness of coverage. Cops and court beats should be entered in this contest. Submissions for local and state government, education, health, sports, faith, business, and growth and development beat contests must be entered into (32) Government Beat Reporting, (14) Health Beat Reporting, (35) Education Beat Reporting, (15) Faith Beat Reporting, (16) Sports Beat Reporting, (33) Business Beat Reporting or (34) Growth and Development Beat Reporting contests. A brief letter of explanation describing the reporter's beat and the coverage circumstances may be submitted. This award is for the body of the writer's work, not an individual story. **AN INDIVIDUAL REPORTER MAY SUBMIT ONLY ONE ENTRY PER BEAT COVERED.** One story from each entry may be entered in any other contest.
Submit: Upload all full-page PDFs or submit the URL to each story. You can also upload your beat reporting stories to an e-edition viewer and share a URL to the package. Enter the beat topic into the Title/Cutline box. If you are submitting a letter of explanation, upload it as a PDF file.

32. GOVERNMENT BEAT REPORTING | Each entry shall consist of three articles by a SINGLE writer on local or state government topics. No staff/multiple byline entries will be allowed. Criteria include enterprise, writing quality and effectiveness in explaining government matters. This award is for the body of the writer's work, not an individual story. **AN INDIVIDUAL REPORTER MAY SUBMIT ONLY ONE ENTRY PER BEAT COVERED.** One story from each entry may be entered in any other contest. Police and court beat coverage should not be entered into this contest, but should instead be entered into (31) Beat Reporting.
Submit: Upload all full-page PDFs or submit URL to each story. You can also upload your beat reporting stories to an e-edition viewer and share a URL to the package. Enter the beat topic into the Title/Cutline box.

33. BUSINESS BEAT REPORTING | Each entry shall consist of three articles by a SINGLE writer on business topics. No staff/multiple byline entries will be allowed. Criteria include enterprise, writing quality and effectiveness in explaining business matters. This award is for the body of the writer's work, not an individual story. **AN INDIVIDUAL REPORTER MAY SUBMIT ONLY ONE ENTRY PER BEAT COVERED.** One story from each entry may be entered in any other contest. **Enter growth and development beat reporting stories into (34) Growth and Development Beat Reporting.**
Submit: Upload all full-page PDFs or submit URL to each story. You can also upload your beat reporting stories to an e-edition viewer and share a URL to the package. Enter the beat topic into the Title/Cutline box.

KEN BALDWIN AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN BUSINESS JOURNALISM | *Sponsored by the University of South Carolina's School of Journalism and Mass Communications*
First place winners from all divisions of (33) Business Beat Reporting will also compete for a best overall daily and weekly award named in memory of University of South Carolina School of Journalism alumnus and former business editor Kenneth W. Baldwin, Jr., who was passionate about business and financial journalism. Baldwin's early newspaper experience was as sports editor of the Index-Journal and sports reporter for The Columbia Record. He later joined Norfolk, Va.-based Landmark Communications, a privately held media company which has owned newspapers, television stations, Internet businesses, specialty publications and, until 2008, The Weather Channel. Sponsored by the University of South Carolina's School of Journalism and Mass Communications, and made possible by the Baldwin Business and Financial Journalism Endowment Fund, the Baldwin Award winner in the daily and weekly divisions will each be awarded a cash prize of $500 and a special plaque recognizing this honor. There is no fee for this competition; winners are automatically entered by SCPA. Winners will not be announced until the Annual Meeting.

34. GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT BEAT REPORTING | Each entry shall consist of three articles by a SINGLE writer on growth and development. No staff/multiple byline entries will be allowed. Criteria include enterprise, writing quality and effectiveness in explaining growth and development issues. This award is for the body of work, not an individual story. **AN INDIVIDUAL REPORTER MAY SUBMIT ONLY ONE ENTRY.** One story from each entry may be entered in any other contest. Enter general business beat reporting stories into (33) Business Beat Reporting.
Submit: Upload all full-page PDFs or submit URL to each story. You can also upload your beat reporting stories to an e-edition viewer and share a URL to the package. Enter the beat topic into the Title/Cutline box.

35. EDUCATION BEAT REPORTING | Each entry shall consist of three articles by a SINGLE writer on education topics. No staff/multiple byline entries will be allowed. Criteria include enterprise, writing quality and effectiveness in explaining education matters. This award is for the body of the writer's work, not an individual story. **AN INDIVIDUAL REPORTER MAY SUBMIT ONLY ONE ENTRY.** One story from each entry may be entered in any other contest.
Submit: Upload all full-page PDFs or submit URL to each story. You can also upload your beat reporting stories to an e-edition viewer and share a URL to the package. Enter the beat topic into the Title/Cutline box.

36. COMMUNITY SERVICE | This award recognizes journalism that performs a public service through compelling coverage of a vital community issue or event. Each entry shall showcase a news organization's community service efforts on a single project/issue. Entry may include news and feature stories, editorials, columns, photos and multimedia content. Entries should demonstrate how the news organization went above and beyond routine coverage and contributed to a greater understanding of or solution to the issue or event. Judges will consider importance of the topic, quality of news organization's effort, degree of involvement and results. Entrants must submit a letter of explanation offering background and describing efforts made by the staff as well as results and overall impact on the community. Testimonials or letters from members of your community may be submitted. There is no limit on the number of entries you may submit in this contest, but each specific project/effort must be submitted as an individual entry. Any part of this entry may be submitted in any other category.
Submit: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit a URL to each article/digital component. Upload letter of explanation as a PDF file. Enter the community service topic into the Title/Cutline box.

37. NEWS FEATURE WRITING | Each entry shall consist of a single news feature article. Criteria include originality and effectiveness of writing in a news feature story. Sidebar material (including video) appearing the same day of publication may be included.
Submit: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL to story. Enter the story's headline into the Title/Cutline box.

38. LIFESTYLE FEATURE WRITING | Each entry shall consist of a single lifestyle feature article. Entries may include sidebar material (including video) appearing the same day of publication. Columns are not eligible. Enter food features into (40) Food Writing. Enter arts and entertainment features into (41) Arts and Entertainment Writing.
Submit: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL to story. Enter the story's headline into the Title/Cutline box.

39. PROFILE FEATURE WRITING OR STORY | Each entry shall consist of a single story that presents a portrait study or captures the essence of a personality. Criteria include originality and effectiveness of the writing in a feature story. Sidebar material (including video) appearing the same day of publication may be included. Enter all food-related/chef profiles into (40) Food Writing. Enter obituaries into (43) Obituary.
Submit: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL to story. Enter the story's headline into the Title/Cutline box.

40. FOOD WRITING | Entry shall consist of a single article on any food or cuisine, restaurant, food farming, nutrition, beer, wine and/or spirits, news and feature food stories, as well as recipe columns, and restaurant/chef profiles. Entries will be judged on writing, creativity, knowledge of subject matter and relevance of the topic. Sidebar material (including video) appearing the same day of publication may be included. This contest is not for restaurant reviews. Those entries should be submitted into (13) Review Portfolio.
Submit: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL to story. Enter the story's headline into the Title/Cutline box.

41. ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT WRITING | Entry shall consist of a single article on any local or regional arts or entertainment subject. News and feature stories on any arts genre, including (but not limited to) film, music, pop culture, literature, dance, video, video games, multimedia, photography, painting, sculpture, theater and performance art may be submitted into this contest. Entries will be judged on writing, creativity, knowledge of subject matter and relevance of the topic. Sidebar material (including video) appearing the same day of publication may be included. This contest is not for performance reviews. Those entries should be submitted into (13) Review Portfolio.
Submit: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL to story. Enter the story's headline into the Title/Cutline box.

42. SHORT STORY | Each entry shall consist of a single story that is approximately 500 words or less. Criteria include originality and effectiveness of the writing in a short story, regardless of topic. Sports and humor stories may be entered in this contest.
Submit: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL to story. Enter the story's headline into the Title/Cutline box.

43. OBITUARY | Each entry shall consist of a single obituary/tribute written by an individual writer or news organization staff. Criteria include originality, use of multiple sources, quality of writing and ability to show how much value ordinary and not so ordinary lives have in a community. The obit can run anywhere in the newspaper or online (news, features, sports, obits, etc.).
Submit: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL. Enter the obituary's headline into the Title/Cutline box.

44. LEDE | ***NEW CONTEST!*** Each entry shall consist of a single story lede. A lede is an opening sentence or paragraph of a story that summarizes the most important aspects and draws a reader in. Criteria include quality of writing, effectiveness, accuracy, cleverness and ability to grab the attention of the reader. Entries in this contest may be entered in other contests.
Submit: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL. Enter the story's headline into the Title/Cutline box.

45. COLUMN WRITING | Each entry shall consist of three published columns written by the SAME PERSON. No staff/ multiple byline entries will be allowed. Criteria include writing quality and the writer's ability to provoke thought or inform the reader. **AN INDIVIDUAL COLUMNIST MAY SUBMIT ONLY ONE ENTRY.** This award is for the body of work, not an individual column. Enter humorous columns into (46) Humor Column Writing and sports columns into (50) Sports Column Writing.
Submit: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit a URL to each column. Enter the columns' headlines into the Title/Cutline box.

46. HUMOR COLUMN WRITING | Each entry shall consist of three published humor columns written by the SAME PERSON. No staff/multiple byline entries will be allowed. Criteria include writing quality and the writer's ability to provoke laughter. **AN INDIVIDUAL COLUMNIST MAY SUBMIT ONLY ONE ENTRY.** This award is for the body of work, not an individual column.
Submit: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit a URL for each column. Enter the columns' headlines into the Title/Cutline box.

47. SPOT SPORTS STORY | Each entry shall consist of a single spot sports story, including game stories. Criteria include reporting, writing quality and originality under pressure of deadline. Sidebar material (including video) appearing the same day of publication may be included.
Submit: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL to story. Enter the story's headline into the Title/Cutline box.

48. SPORTS ENTERPRISE REPORTING | Each entry shall consist of a single sports enterprise article or multiple sports enterprise articles on a single subject. Criteria include initiative, enterprise, writing quality and thoroughness. The category is distinguished from (47) Spot Sports Story in that deadline pressure is not relevant, although timeliness certainly is a factor. Sidebar material (including video) may be included. Editors are encouraged to submit a short letter illustrating reporter's enterprise.
Submit: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL to story. Enter the story's headline into the Title/Cutline box. If you are submitting a letter of explanation, upload it as a PDF file.

49. SPORTS FEATURE STORY | Each entry shall consist of a single sports feature story. Criteria include originality and effectiveness of the writing in a sports feature story. Columns or sports news articles are ineligible. Entries may include sidebar material (including video) appearing the same day of publication.
Submit: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit URL to story. Enter the story's headline into the Title/Cutline box.

50. SPORTS COLUMN WRITING | Each entry shall consist of three published sports columns written by the SAME PERSON. No staff/multiple byline entries will be allowed. Criteria include writing quality and the writer's ability to provoke thought, inform or entertain the reader. **AN INDIVIDUAL COLUMNIST MAY SUBMIT ONLY ONE ENTRY.** This award is for the body of work, not an individual column.
Submit: Upload full-page PDF(s) or submit a URL for each column. Enter the columns' headlines into the Title/Cutline box.

51. PAGE ONE DESIGN | Each entry shall consist of a single front page. Criteria include creativity and effective communication to readers, clear and forceful headlines, captions and photographic display.
Submit: Upload one full-page PDF. Enter page date into Title/Cutline box.

52. FEATURE PAGE DESIGN | Each entry shall consist of a single feature page. 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 Title/Cutline box.

53. SPORTS PAGE DESIGN | Each entry shall consist of a single sports page. 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 Title/Cutline box.

54. INSIDE PAGE DESIGN | Each entry shall consist of a single inside page of the entrant's choosing, including but not limited to Business, Editorial, Nation/World and Local fronts. 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 Title/Cutline box.

55. PHOTO PAGE DESIGN | Each entry shall consist of a page dominated by photos. Judging criteria will emphasize page design, selection and display of photos.
Submit: Upload one full-page PDF. Enter the page's title or headline into the Title/Cutline box.

56. SPOT NEWS PHOTO | Each entry shall consist of a single photograph of an unplanned news event. Criteria include quality and impact of the photo. For example, photos may cover, but are not limited to: fires, vehicle accidents, natural disasters, shootings, etc.
Submit: Upload one high-res image as a JPG file. Enter cutline in Title/Cutline box.

57. GENERAL NEWS PHOTO | Each entry shall consist of a single photograph of a scheduled or organized news event (or issue-photography that explores an important social, economic or political issue) for which advance planning was possible. Examples include: rallies, government meetings, speeches, pickets, election coverage, homelessness, etc. Criteria include quality and impact of the image.
Submit: Upload one high-res image as a JPG file. Enter cutline in Title/Cutline box.

58. 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.

59. SPORTS ACTION PHOTO | Each entry shall consist of a single photograph portraying action from a game or sporting event. Criteria include quality and impact of the photo. "Reaction" and celebration photos, such as dogpiles, may not be entered in this contest. Instead, enter them into (60) Sports Feature Photo.
Submit: Upload one high-res image as a JPG file. Enter cutline in Title/Cutline box.

60. SPORTS FEATURE PHOTO | Each entry shall consist of a single photograph on a single feature sports subject. "Reaction" and celebration photos, such as dogpiles, must be entered in 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.

61. PERSONALITY PHOTO OR PORTRAIT | Each entry shall consist of a single photograph that captures the essence of an individual personality or one that presents a portrait study. Criteria include quality and impact of the photo.
Submit: Upload one high-res image as a JPG file. Enter cutline in Title/Cutline box.

62. PHOTO SERIES OR PHOTO STORY | Each entry shall consist of a designated series of photographs, photo story or photo gallery on any subject. Criteria include quality, impact and selection of photos, as well as editing and storytelling value. Photos entered in this contest can be entered into other categories. There is a limit of 20 photos per entry.
Submit: Upload high-res JPG files, PDF of printed page or URL to gallery. If uploading JPGs, type cutlines in the Title/Cutline box.

63. PICTORIAL | Each entry shall consist of one pictorial. A pictorial is a photographic image that explores aesthetic qualities through the use of composition, tone and/or color. Content usually is not a news item. (Example: feature photo of a sunset)
Submit: Upload one high-res image as a JPG file. Enter cutline in Title/Cutline box.

64. HUMOROUS PHOTO | Each entry shall consist of one humorous photo that will be judged on the ability to evoke laughter.
Submit: Upload one high-res image as a JPG file. Enter cutline in Title/Cutline box.

65. USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA | This award will recognize excellence, effectiveness and innovation in social media use by the news organization. Entrants are not required to use multiple social media sites. Entrants must submit a letter of explanation describing the use of social media tools, strategy, reach and impact. Each entry may include examples of crowd sourcing, news sharing and community engagement through social media sites like Facebook, X, LinkedIn, Instagram and other social media sites; and other innovative uses of social media. Judges will consider: appropriateness of content, timeliness, efficacy, innovation, creativity, impact and results. This contest is for the body of work. Newspapers may include their main flag and niche site's accounts (sports, entertainment, etc.) as one entry. **LIMIT TO ONE ENTRY PER NEWS ORGANIZATION.** Entries will be live judged during the judging period.
Submit: Enter the URL(s) to your social media pages. Upload your letter of explanation as a PDF file.

66. NEWS VIDEO | This contest is for a single general news or spot news video. Videos of planned news events, as well as breaking news, should be submitted in this contest. Criteria shall include quality of the video and audio, content and editing.
Submit: Enter the URL to the video. Enter title in Title/Cutline box.

67. FEATURE VIDEO | This contest is for a single feature video. Criteria shall include quality of the video and audio, content and editing.
Submit: Enter the URL to the video. Enter title in Title/Cutline box.

68. SPORTS VIDEO | This contest is for a single sports video. Criteria shall include quality of the video and audio, content and editing.
Submit: Enter the URL to the video. Enter title in Title/Cutline box.

69. NEWSLETTER | This contest is for best staff-produced email newsletter. Flagship newsletters, as well as topic-specific newsletters (i.e., sports, politics, entertainment, etc.) may be entered. 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. An individual journalist or staff may enter this contest. Please note this is a news contest... while newsletters may contain advertisements, ads will not be considered by the judge.
Submit: Enter URL(s) to your campaigns. Upload your letter of explanation as a PDF.

70. GENERAL EXCELLENCE: DIGITAL | Criteria include every aspect of journalism, including content, writing, design, editing, headlines, photography, video, multimedia, editorial quality, sports and lifestyle coverage. Judging should be on how the news organization uses digital platform(s) to share news and information, and engage users. Judges will consider usefulness, quality and quantity of content, ease of navigation, accessibility and engagement. Features which encourage audience engagement, including use of social media, push alerts, e-editions, newsletters, multimedia offerings, etc., will be considered. Entrants are not required to publish on multiple digital platforms to enter this contest. Submit a letter of explanation describing how journalists utilize digital platform(s) to share news and engage users. Traffic analytics should be included. Entries will be live judged during the judging period. **EACH NEWS ORGANIZATION MAY SUBMIT ONLY ONE ENTRY.**
Submit: Enter URL(s). Upload your letter of explanation.

71. GENERAL EXCELLENCE: PRINT | Each newspaper shall submit an issue published during the week of Sept. 6-12, 2026, and one issue from the month of February 2026. A monthly newspaper that does not publish during Sept. 6-12, 2026 may submit the edition published closest to those dates. Criteria include every aspect of journalism, including content, writing, design, editing, headlines, use of photographs, editorial page quality, sports and lifestyle coverage. The entire newspaper, excluding advertising, shall be considered. If your newspaper does not meet certain criteria, you are still eligible to enter (you will just not receive points in that area). **EACH NEWSPAPER MAY SUBMIT ONLY ONE ENTRY.** Only first place shall be awarded in Division A.

SCORING:
- In a 25 point category: Excellent = 20-25 points; good = 15-19 points; fair = 10-14 points
- In a 15 point category: Excellent = 12-15 points; good = 8-11 points; fair = 4-7 points
- In a 10 point category: Excellent = 8-10 points; good = 5-7 points; fair = 2-4 points

CRITERIA:
- Content/coverage: Quality and quantity of local news, staff generated coverage, balance and depth of coverage – Up to 25 points
- Quality of writing/editing: Story organization, quality of leads, editing, headlines, mechanics and style – Up to 15 points
- Design/layout – Up to 15 points
- Use of photographs/graphics – Up to 15 points
- Editorial page quality – Up to 10 points
- Sports coverage – Up to 10 points
- Lifestyle coverage – Up to 10 points

Submit: Enter URLs to e-edition viewer or upload full-page PDFs from the editions.