

CLASS 01 - GENERAL EXCELLENCE

Division A

1st Place: LeRoy Farmer City Press, Jerry Nowicki. LeRoy Farmer City Press. “Now this is what a community newspaper is supposed to look like. From the attractive front page to the engaging editorial page to the rich sports coverage, this paper is a winner!”

2nd Place: Forest Park Review, Staff. Two issues, June 24 and Oct. 21. “Fine paper, through and through. Calendar section particularly strong. But why an obituary on the editorial page?”

3rd Place: Berwyn Suburban Life, Staff. Berwyn Suburban Life. “Attractive, lively, newsy — You serve the Berwyn community well. Separate the advertorial from the editorial, however.”

Honorable Mention: Mahomet Citizen, Staff. General Excellence, Mahomet Citizen. “Fine paper could be even better with a little more attention to drop-in headers. The rectangle boxes don't work, particularly on the editorial page.”

Division B

1st Place: Effingham & Teutopolis News Report, Staff. June 25, Nov 12. “Impressed with this one!”

2nd Place: Bureau County Republican, Princeton, BCR Staff. General Excellence. “Nice Republican. Good layout. Good community coverage.”

3rd Place: Republic-Times, Waterloo, Staff. General Excellence - Division B - Republic-Times. “I like this paper.”

Honorable Mention: Pike Press, Pittsfield, Staff. Pike Press entry for General Excellence. “Nice mix, good layout, good editorial.”

Division C

1st Place: Austin Weekly News, Chicago, Michael Romain, Dawn Ferencak, Staff. Austin Weekly News General Excellence. “Excellent coverage of key issues in the community, with effective writing and design. Outstanding use of photos.”

2nd Place: Downers Grove Suburban Life, Staff. Downers Grove Suburban Life. “Particularly impressive is the scope of coverage included in these issues. Writing is crisp and clean, and photos add significant visual appeal.”

3rd Place: Jersey County Journal, Jerseyville, Staff. Jersey County Journal General Excellence. “Nice work covering a variety of community issues and events, with subjects that matter to readers. Good presentation and use of visuals.”

Division D

1st Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Staff. The Register-Mail General Excellence. “Excellent presentation and reporting, with a robust editorial presence that sets a high standard. Good mix of local news and lifestyle reporting, with outstanding visuals.”

2nd Place: Journal Gazette & Times-Courier, Mattoon, Staff. “Excellent overall presentation with a solid mix of news in a variety of subjects, both local and broad. Tight writing, excellent editorial content, and effective layout and design.”

3rd Place: Morris Herald-News, Staff of the Morris Herald-News. Morris Herald-News. “Effective design and presentation with excellent use of visuals that create an attractive, compelling product. Content is on target with a blend of local and state news delivered in a clean, powerful package.”

Honorable Mention: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Staff. Daily Chronicle. “Compelling headlines, meaningful content, and effective writing make this publication a winner in this category. Excellent use of photos paired with crisp writing and meaningful content.”

Division E

1st Place: The Pantagraph, Bloomington, Staff. General excellence. “Robust local coverage gives you the feel for the area. Lots of great local photos as well. Layout and design was clean and easy to read.”

2nd Place: The Herald-News, Joliet, Staff. The Herald-News. “Great community reporting. Presentation is clean and attractive. Front page treatments work well with the story content.”

3rd Place: The Southern Illinoian, Carbondale, Staff. The Southern Illinoian. “Great treatment of the front cover photo and headline. Good read. Lot's of local stories. Interesting variety of topics relevant to the community.”

Honorable Mention: Sauk Valley Media, Sterling, Staff. Sauk Valley Media. “Storm coverage and photos are comprehensive and interesting. The ‘Stormify’ reader submitted photos and captions add to the coverage. The Food section is a good mix of practical and inspirational ideas.”

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Tribune Media Group, Staff. Chicago Tribune: March 8, June 24. “What great all around reads. The Tornado coverage and following pages of photos show the emotion of the people. Perspective pages are current, interesting and well written. The papers are so full of interesting stories that appeal to a wide audience range.”

2nd Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Staff. Chicago Sun-Times general excellence: 2 complete editions. “Layout direction of the ‘Chicago's Shepard’ was compelling and brings the reader in on many levels. City Beat is well done and comprehensive. Stories are varied and interesting. Not a huge fan of the USA Today copy. Most of it is an optional read that feels like filler.”

3rd Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Staff. The Daily Herald. “Great unique local coverage. Cover story on addiction was very well done and draws the reader in to every last word. Photography that accompanied the story was appropriate and helped tell the story. Great read and plenty of variety to draw readers in and spend some time catching up.”

Honorable Mention: Journal Star, Peoria, Staff. Journal Star. “Cover photo and article ‘Washington’s Title’ was very well played. Captured the readers and drew them into the paper. The graphics and photo for the story ‘Lawmakers’ was equally well played.”

CLASS 02 - COMMUNITY SERVICE

Division A

1st Place: LeRoy Farmer City Press , Jerry Nowicki. Coverage of Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall. “As a member of the Vietnam war generation these articles did a great job of highlighting war veterans who are often forgotten. Perhaps for younger readers a bit more history of the war could have been included.”

2nd Place: The Hoopston Chronicle, Jordan Crook. Save the Lorraine Foundation Coverage. “Not every historical building can be saved but the newspaper did a good job explaining to the public why this one was worthy of the effort.”

3rd Place: Oakland Independent, Janice Hunt. Consider gift ideas that give back to our community. “Not exactly sure this fits the category but one could argue that reminding people to purchase local things is a good idea.”

Honorable Mention: The Sidell Reporter, Suzanne Woodard. Motorcycle Safety. “Nice layout and a good reminder for your community.”

Division B

1st Place: The Galena Gazette, Staff. Peace in Union. “WOW! This entry blew me away. I frankly have no idea how this entry could have been improved. It is simply outstanding. ”

2nd Place: Metropolis Planet, Areia Hathcock, Angie Humphries & Michele Longworth. Fill the Storefronts. “Here is a subject that plagues nearly every rural midwest town. The articles did a good job explaining the problem and the incentives available to turn things around. I would hope to see follow ups if the effort did actually result in new business.”

3rd Place: Bureau County Republican, Princeton, Terri Simon. Women of Distinction. “Nice job highlighting the important roles that women play in the local community.”

Honorable Mention: The Prairie Press, Paris, Nancy Zeman, Gary Henry, Tay Smith. Eveland Gym. “I can tell you spent a lot of time on this section. Good job highlighting how the sport and coach impacted many in your community.”

Division D

1st Place: The Journal-Standard, Freeport, Jillian Duchnowski, Karen Patterson and Sunny Strader. Rebuilding Neighborhoods. “Wow, you folks got into community service right up to your hips/ Great job of not only drawing attention to the problem but bringing forward solutions. Excellent work.”

2nd Place: Jersey County Journal, Jerseyville, Bob Crossen. Permitting the Two Rivers Rally. “Excellent job of highlighting the backward thinking of local officials. Really, a Christian motorcycle rally is suspect? What would Jesus do?”

3rd Place: Journal Gazette & Times-Courier, Mattoon, Staff. PADS story series. “Lots of work in this series. Good job wrapping the whole thing in one neat package.”

Honorable Mention: Journal Gazette & Times-Courier, Mattoon, Staff. College enrollment series.

Division E

1st Place: Belleville News-Democrat, Beth Hundsdorfer and George Pawlaczyk. Violation of trust. “This project was outstanding in terms of the reporters' legwork, the powerful storytelling, the clear and compelling findings of the investigation, and the call to action. The newspaper's yearlong investigation uncovered a disturbing pattern of injustice in sexual assault cases across 32 counties in Illinois. It included the personal stories of victims, as well as the accused. And the data presentation was excellent. A clear winner.”

2nd Place: The Southern Illinoian, Carbondale, Molly Parker. Chaos in Cairo. “The Southern Illinoian and reporter Molly Parker performed a remarkable and important community service through this investigation of corruption in an urban housing authority. This entry came in second, but it was a very close second. The writing and imagery were compelling, the watchdog work was bold, the presentation was excellent and the early results of the work are impressive. One hopes that the newspaper's work truly improves living conditions for the families in the Cairo community.”

3rd Place: The State Journal-Register, Springfield, Staff. SJR Community Engagement. “This entry stood out because of its diverse and consistent approach to community service through direct engagement. From routine involvement of readers in shaping news coverage, to live events, to community leadership awards, the State Journal-Register represents a clear culture of engagement. Bravo.”

Honorable Mention: The Southern Illinoian, Carbondale, Nick Mariano. The high price of justice. “A good use of data, and a personal story, to show just how hard it is to get a fair shake in the criminal justice system without money.”

Division F

1st Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Tim Broderick, Melissa Silverberg, Linda Lutton. Generations at Risk. “This entry clearly stood out from the rest, in all criteria considered: subject matter, local relevance, writing, presentation and innovation. The Daily Herald developed a unique method to show the link between family income and student success, and more importantly found solutions to turn around poor-performing schools. This project showed tremendous community leadership and engagement of not just experts but also of families and readers. Superb work.”

2nd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Staff. Journal Star Community Outreach. “The Journal Star took on an ambitious and potentially fraught task of helping a troubled neighborhood create a better future. The

first steps are impressive: engaging members of the community, clearly reporting the problems, identifying solutions. It will be interesting to see how the Journal Star builds on its momentum in 2016 and beyond.”

3rd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Phil Luciano. Remembering Jimmy Binkley. “This effort stands out in terms of reader response: An estimated 1,500 gifts donated to continue a man's legacy and brighten the holidays for hundreds of shut-ins and nursing home residents. The writer's involvement was moving, as well. The entry would have been strengthened with digital elements such as a video or slideshow, which, while not required, could have added a dimension to reader experience.”

Honorable Mention: The Dispatch & The Rock Island Argus, Kenda Burrows, Eric Timmons. Niaibi Zoo. “This entry showed an impressive persistence in editorials pushing for better management of a local treasure, the Niaibi Zoo. It is hard to know from the entry whether the newspaper's involvement influenced decision-makers, but there was movement toward change. Also, while online content was not required, it might have further engaged readers to show videos and other digital interactives comparing the local zoo to others. The study cited was limited to 40 respondents: Perhaps the Rock Island Argus could conduct a reader poll of its own to further engagement in 2016.”

CLASS 03 - LOCAL EDITORIAL

Division A

1st Place: Lebanon Advertiser, David Porter. Horner Park. “Well written, strongly argued and very persuasive. A little long, however.”

2nd Place: Forest Park Review, Dan Haley. Calderone's opportunity. “Wow, tough but seemingly fair by buttressing your argument with voters' diminished view of Calderone's rule. Constructively argued, too. Nice job.”

3rd Place: Berwyn Suburban Life, Dave Lemery. Lack of options in D-201; Bill would give voters more choices. “Well written and clearly argued.”

Honorable Mention: LeRoy Farmer City Press, Jerry Nowicki. DeWitt County Board Editorial. “Good observations, well presented but way too long. Chop this in half and create two editorials, please.”

Division B

1st Place: The Galena Gazette, Carter Newton, Hillary Dickerson. Public deserves answers.

2nd Place: The Prairie Press, Paris, Gary Henry. Demand public civility.

3rd Place: The Greenville Advocate, Dave Bell. Good Of Entire City Should Be Goal Of Green Gables Decision.

Honorable Mention: The Enterprise, Plainfield, Jonathan Samples. Fighting Domestic Violence.

Division C

1st Place: Downers Grove Suburban Life, Dave Lemery. Consolidation efforts a great step forward. “Well supported and sensibly argued. Nice job!”

2nd Place: Downers Grove Suburban Life, Dave Lemery. SB 1 just another dose of the same bad medicine. “Well written and explained, but didn't suggest an alternative funding mechanism.”

3rd Place: Downers Grove Suburban Life, Dave Lemery. Bland family shouldn't have to wait forever.

Division D

1st Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Eric Olson. Transparency needed in tax-break deals. “Strong well crafted editorial. Makes a clear point and sticks with it.”

2nd Place: Paris Beacon-News, Denise Cravens. Tax will hinder, not help. “Well done editorial giving examples of why a tax on advertising is a poor choice.”

3rd Place: Breeze-Courier, Taylorville, Marylee Rasar. Tourism and taxes. “Interesting formatting and structure, but sticks with a point. Almost bends over backward to be polite while telling someone their vote was wrong.”

Honorable Mention: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Eric Olson. How could this happen? “Solid editorial expressing outrage about how an accused predator could be allowed to substitute teach. Wish it had gone the next step and provided ideas for solutions to keep it from happening again.”

Division E

1st Place: The Southern Illinoisan, Carbondale, The Southern Editorial Board. State government woes: Rauner v. Madigan. “This editorial board isn't afraid to hold its elected officials accountable for the dysfunctional state of government in Illinois. Well researched with a wealth of data to back up this hard-hitting editorial series. Well done!”

2nd Place: Sauk Valley Media, Sterling, Jim Dunn. Heroin overdose deaths a call to action. “This series shines a hard to escape spotlight on the scourge of heroin use. Excellent, well balanced writing clearly defined the issues and made its case for a call to action.”

3rd Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Jim Dey. Ash Wednesday. “Writer holds the school board's feet to the fire for launching a questionable investigation. Keep up the good work!”

Honorable Mention: Rockford Register Star, Wally Haas. Affordable housing. “Very strong entry. I'm sure this well written series hit home with residents on both sides of the issue.”

Division F

1st Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Mike Bailey. Schock resigns. “This series was the perfect combination of a lively writing style used to paint a picture of an extremely important issue. The authors did a wonderful job of illustrating the absurdity of Schock's actions while remaining professional.”

2nd Place: The Dispatch & The Rock Island Argus, Kenda Burrows. Niabi Zoo. “This series is a great example of newspaper not only serving as the channel for community dialog, but also advancing it. The pieces were well written, to the point and emphasized community building. I really like that the paper made suggestions about talking to other zoos, and then instead of leaving that up to politicians and community members went out and did it themselves. Well done.”

3rd Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Jim Slusher, John Lampinen, Editorial Board. Generations at Risk Editorials. “An engaging series on important community building efforts. The only

improvements I would have made is to do less rehashing and find more examples of kids who are directly benefitting from the programs. Overall very well done.”

Honorable Mention: Chicago Sun-Times, Tom McNamee, Tom Frisbie. A series of editorials on problems with the Chicago Police Department, Chicago Sun-Times. “Well written series on an important topic. I like the way the Sun-Times connected incidents from a decade ago to today. Too often I feel the media covers something and then drops it. This series did a great job bridging issues past and present to effectively demonstrate very real problems in Chicago. However, at times the writing could have been more engaging.”

CLASS 04 - EDITORIAL PAGE

Division A

1st Place: Forest Park Review, Staff. Two Opinion sections, July 8 and April 1. “Well done pages with good mixture of content. The candidate rebuttal header is effective.”

2nd Place: Berwyn Suburban Life, Staff. Berwyn Suburban Life editorial page. “Attractive layout and use of images. The poll at the top is a bit heavy as a page element.”

3rd Place: Ford County Record, Paxton, Staff. August 19 editorial page. “Page looks cluttered with the number of elements.”

Division B

1st Place: Wednesday Journal of Oak Park & River Forest, Ken Trainor. Viewpoints section, July 8 and Nov. 25. “Strong editorial stand and vibrant local debate. A well done section”

2nd Place: Glen Ellyn Suburban Life, Staff. Glen Ellyn Suburban Life editorial page. “Like the use of photos to go with the main editorial.”

3rd Place: Macoupin County Enquirer-Democrat, Carlinville, Staff. Editorial Pages. “I really like the bullets identifying the topic and the point of the editorial. Left me wondering who the members of the editorial board were and he who the columnist was.”

Honorable Mention: The Galena Gazette, Carter Newton, Hillary Dickerson. Editorial Page. “Nice mixture of content from longer publisher column to letters.”

Division D

1st Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Staff. Opinions. “A welcome mix of a local column, editorial, and letters.”

2nd Place: Downers Grove Suburban Life, Staff. Downers Grove Suburban Life editorial page. “Love the poll, which adds yet another local element alongside the column and editorial. Be careful not to go too ‘gray’ - the photo on the July page added a lot.”

3rd Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Tom Martin. The Register-Mail Editorial Page. “The roundtable “man on the street” piece is a great concept, but way too long. There's not much space left on the page for anything else. Where are the local editorials?”

Honorable Mention: Journal Gazette & Times-Courier, Mattoon, Staff. JG-TC Opinions pages. “The editor is asking a lot of readers to stick with such long columns. These pages rely too heavily on the history column.”

Division E

1st Place: Quincy Herald-Whig, Don Crim, Ken Jones. Herald-Whig editorial page.

2nd Place: The State Journal-Register, Springfield, Jayette Bolinski. State Journal-Register Editorial Pages.

3rd Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Staff. Northwest Herald Opinions.

Honorable Mention: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Jim Dey, Dan Corkery, Dave Bureson. The News-Gazette.

Division F

1st Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Jim Slusher, Editorial Board. The Daily Herald Opinion Page. “Great use of graphics, color and comics. Clean and organized layout and various, intriguing stories.”

2nd Place: The Dispatch & The Rock Island Argus, Kenda Burrows, Viewpoints editor. Viewpoints. “Clean, organized layout. Good use of photos and unique stories.”

3rd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Mike Bailey. Journal Star Editorial Page. “Interesting stories, but could maybe use more graphics to break stories up and make the pages pop a little more.”

CLASS 05 - NEWS REPORTING - SINGLE STORY

Division A

1st Place: The Fulton Democrat, Lewistown, John Froehling. Trust. “Excellent explanation of the mismanagement of the one trust and the challenges for the beneficiaries of the second trust. Boiled down what can be a difficult story to understand to its essential elements. Very nicely written”

2nd Place: Elburn Herald, Violet Marquardt. A horse of a different name. “Very touching and unlikely reunion story; nicely written.”

3rd Place: Elburn Herald, Suzanne Flynn. Inspiration not far from home. “Talk about turning tragedy to triumph; awesome story.”

Honorable Mention: Coal City Courant, Ann Gill. An editor's tale of becoming a victim. “Very well done first person on what it's like to be the victim of a natural disaster. (Loved the touch about the reporters).”

Division B

1st Place: Pike Press, Pittsfield, Beth Zumwalt. Congressional Gold Medal ceremony reminds Springer family of sacrifice. “An excellent story overall.”

2nd Place: The Joliet Bugle, Stewart Warren. Large crowd mourns slain clerk outside store. “This story had the right balance of heart and news. I think the reporter did a masterful job of portraying a community’s loss while still delivering the news.”

3rd Place: Bureau County Republican, Princeton, Dave Cook. In a galaxy far, far away. “The force is strong with this one.”

Honorable Mention: The Prairie Press, Paris, Gary Henry. Woman Rescues Child from Lake. “I could actually picture the incident from the reporter's descriptive writing. Great job.”

Division C

1st Place: Austin Weekly News, Chicago, La Risa Lynch. "\$1000 reward offered at prayer vigil for information on toddler found in Garfield Park Lagoon". “Tight writing, solid lede, and thorough reporting make this story a winner. The writer captured emotion and revealed the depth of anguish the community was feeling.”

2nd Place: Austin Weekly News, Chicago, Michael Romain. "West Siders protest on the Magnificent Mile". “This reporter did an outstanding job on an issue with local and nationwide significance. Outstanding reporting and tight writing.”

3rd Place: Illinois Times, Springfield, Bruce Rushton. Horrific health care. “Excellent reporting on an issue that too often falls between the cracks. Solid writing, effective use of quotes, and thoroughness make this story a winner.”

Honorable Mention: Illinois Times, Springfield, Patrick Yeagle. Homeless for the holidays. “Good example of a unique angle on a prevailing problem in our society. Thoughtful and thorough reporting.”

Division D

1st Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Staff. Recovery efforts begin. “Marvelous team coverage of a disaster -- hard-hitting, and also helpful.”

2nd Place: Morris Herald-News, Lauren Leone-Cross. Heroin use on the rise. “A strong mix of the personal story and the trend, the local and the overall.”

3rd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Adam Poulisse. Ethan Menges' fight for survival. “Hard-hitting, heart-stopping, well-told story.”

Honorable Mention: Pekin Daily Times, Michael Smothers . Elderly man saves kids from knife attack. “Great story of not-so-ordinary heroism.”

Division E

1st Place: Rockford Register Star, Corina Curry. On the backs of kids: Money for poor kids paying off Illinois pensions. “What a beautiful job taking on a complex story and presenting it to the reader with such detail and clarity. I can't imagine how much work Corina put into this, but it was worth the effort. Kudos!”

2nd Place: Sauk Valley Media, Sterling, Pam Eggemeier, Angel Sierra, Andy Colbert. Picking up the pieces. “The editorial team did an outstanding job in its coverage. I really appreciate how you were able

to take a broad look at the storm's impact, from the families all the way up to the state's response. Great work.”

3rd Place: The Pantagraph, Bloomington, Staff. Plane crash. “Tragic stories like this are difficult to report, but these reporters did a fantastic job in their coverage and identifying sources to talk about the victims. Good work all around.”

Honorable Mention: Belleville News-Democrat, George Pawlaczyk. Parks write-in votes. “Though this was a difficult category to judge with many great entries, I had to give a nod to the work done here. Excellent use of open records and finding a handwriting expert to conduct analysis. I love seeing this kind of dedication to a story.”

Division F

1st Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Staff. Caterpillar lays off 10,000 workers. “The Journal Star went all in and left no stone unturned in reporting the Caterpillar layoffs. What an incredibly thorough job tackling a story that was bound to affect everyone in Peoria. Marvelous work!”

2nd Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Lee Filas, Pete Nenni, Staff. Ultimate Betrayal. “I recall reading about this story, but after seeing the Daily Herald's coverage I realize what I saw only scratched the surface. The depth of reporting and quality of writing here is fantastic, and the reporters involved should be proud.”

3rd Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Marni Pyke. Breaking the Law, Badly. “It was not only the writing but the reporting that stood out here. Excellent job getting out and reporting what was truly happening on the city's streets.”

Honorable Mention: Chicago Tribune Media Group, Jared S. Hopkins. Documents shed new light on Chicago's plans to host NFL draft. “Interesting piece and very timely. Great use of open records.”

CLASS 06 - NEWS REPORTING - SERIES

Division A

1st Place: Niles Journal, Tom Robb. Questions Remain After Superintendent Dismissal. “This is some excellent watchdog journalism, right to the end where no one seems to know why the board spent \$100,000 of taxpayers' money to drum these folks out of their jobs.”

2nd Place: Cass County Star-Gazette, Beardstown, Sandy Haschemeyer. Illinois River edges toward record levels. “Nicely handled. You provide your readers good information they would need in the crisis, then follow through with just a photo of things returning to normal rather than going into a long story that rehashes everything previously reported.”

3rd Place: The Vienna Times, Staff. Allie Byrd3. “I hope you continue to follow Allie's story. She has an impressive spirit considering what she's been through. The writing made her very real to me and has me cheering her on and watching for the next story.”

Honorable Mention: The Fulton Democrat, Lewistown, John Froehling. Cuba vs Anderson Lawsuit. "Great pieces on the sometimes stupid things bureaucrats do, but I would have liked to have seen an update to the costs paid by taxpayers in the futile effort to collect a \$100 fine."

Division B

1st Place: Rochelle News-Leader, Staff. A Path of Destruction. "This series covered every aspect of the tornado's impact, from residents, businesses, animals and more. A wide variety of sources were used to tell these stories. Writing was clear and timely."

2nd Place: The Greenville Advocate, Jan Dona. Drug Use Series. "This series looked at the drug use problem from several angles. Many sources were used, and the writing was clear."

3rd Place: Cook County Chronicle, Chicago, Jean Lotus. Body-parts trade. "This series was eye-opening and made a local connection to a widespread issue."

Honorable Mention: The Galena Gazette, Hillary Dickerson. Superintendent on leave. "This series provided readers with an in-depth look at the issue. It was clear through reading the series that the issue was of great importance to the community, which was reflected through the use of many different sources."

Division C

1st Place: Jersey County Journal, Jerseyville, Bob Crossen, Mark Pace. Chronicles of Project Team Jonny.

2nd Place: Illinois Times, Springfield, Bruce Rushton. ALPLM adrift.

3rd Place: Illinois Times, Springfield, Patrick Yeagle. Jury struggles to reach verdict in child death trial.

Honorable Mention: Illinois Times, Springfield, Bruce Rushton. Law enFARCEment.

Division D

1st Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Staff. Domestic Violence in Knox County.

2nd Place: The Journal-Standard, Freeport, Jillian Duchnowski. Rebuilding Neighborhoods.

3rd Place: Journal Gazette & Times-Courier, Mattoon, Staff. College enrollment series.

Honorable Mention: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Staff. Fairdale Tornado.

Division E

1st Place: Belleville News-Democrat, Beth Hundsdorfer and George Pawlaczyk. Violation of Trust. "This story did an excellent job of telling a very moving story through the eyes of those impacted."

2nd Place: Quincy Herald-Whig, Don O'Brien. Shooting death of Ray Humphrey Jr. "Sticking with a story like this for months and months can be extremely difficult but you can tell this paper was the go-to source for this story and provided information no one else could."

3rd Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Staff. The shooting of Lt. Joe Gliniewicz. "This story gained national attention, but the newspaper did an excellent job of measuring community reaction and had a local connection that other media didn't."

Honorable Mention: The Pantagraph, Bloomington, Edith Brady-Lunny. Tracking stolen guns. “It was shocking to learn how many stolen guns aren’t recovered and a wake up call as a reader.”

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Stefano Esposito. 'Evi & Walter: A love story in any key,' by Stefano Esposito, Chicago Sun-Times. “This story was so unbelievably touching, beautifully written and also informative.”

2nd Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Burt Constable, Lee Filas, Tim Broderick. The Two Faces of Lt. Gliniewicz. “The paper did a wonderful job of breaking down the thought process of Gliniewicz.”

3rd Place: Chicago Tribune Media Group, Staff. Laquan McDonald scandal. “The reporters did a great job of providing conscience and interesting facts in this story.”

Honorable Mention: Journal Star, Peoria, Leslie Renken. Hog Farm Causes Division. “It was interesting to see how a community banded together to protect it's own. The paper did a good job of providing context and background to readers.”

CLASS 07 - GOVERNMENT BEAT REPORTING

Division A

1st Place: Pinckneyville Press, Jeff Egbert, Brett Templeton. Woman Steals Thousands from Rural Fire Protection District. “These types of stories can be time consuming to report on but your stories show that you put in the time needed to tell the story to readers.”

2nd Place: Pinckneyville Press, Brett Templeton, Jeff Egbert. County Board Violates OMA. “Part of the job of the press is to keep keep the government accountable. With this series of stories, you did your job.”

3rd Place: Oakland Independent, Janice Hunt. Going wet. “Well written and clearly presented the journey from ‘dry’ to allowing alcohol.”

Honorable Mention: Ford County Record, Paxton, Will Brumleve. Courts.

Division B

1st Place: The Niles Bugle, Igor Studenkov. Niles village board. “Well written!”

2nd Place: Pike Press, Pittsfield, Justin A. Cobb. The Crossing - Pittsfield zoning request. “Compelling!”

3rd Place: Cook County Chronicle, Chicago, Kevin Beese. Cook County government beat. “Succinct. Good coverage.”

Honorable Mention: Riverside-Brookfield Landmark, Bob Uphues. Village of Brookfield government. “I was a bit confused with what I should be following with all these articles, but felt the village government coverage was very good.”

Division C

1st Place: Illinois Times, Springfield, Patrick Yeagle. Illinois Innocence Project. "Well done!"

2nd Place: Illinois Times, Springfield, Patrick Yeagle. Illinois' budget crisis. "Thorough coverage, good reporting."

3rd Place: Illinois Times, Springfield, Bruce Rushton. Law enFORCEment. "Decent job on relatively lame subject matter."

Honorable Mention: Jersey County Journal, Jerseyville, Bob Crossen. Regular dealing of the Grafton Council.

Division D

1st Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Ben Zigterman. Ben Zigterman - School District 205. "Zigterman and his colleagues fought the good fight for openness in government (although it must be clarified that open meetings laws are designed to protect the rights of the PUBLIC, not just the rights of newsgatherers). Another outstanding quality of the coverage is its long-term institutional memory, and tying events of the past to the present."

2nd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Rhonda Gillespie. Northern Illinois University coverage. "The range of topics -- from exorbitant taxpayer-funded legal bills to an innovative eatery -- makes this entry stand out."

3rd Place: The Commercial-News, Danville, Jennifer Bailey. Social media key to city, county government interaction. "A reasonably strong first look at a topic that is likely to be ongoing in city and county governments."

Honorable Mention: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Marty Hobe. Marty Hobe - City of Galesburg. "This package represents pretty decent City Hall reporting, on a wide variety of topics. Copy-editing needs improvement; in this context, '1 year old' doesn't take hyphens. (See 'grade separation' story.)"

Division E

1st Place: The Times, Ottawa, David Giuliani. Drug forfeiture program. "David Giuliani performs a public service in his investigation of the SAFE program, delving into all its corners, finding gems such as the money spent on lavish entertaining during officers' training. Drug forfeitures are an important national issue, and Giuliani has given his readers a clear picture of what's going on in their backyards. Good digging!"

2nd Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Johnathan Hettinger. Champaign. "Johnathan Hettinger delivers a superb, balanced look at sometimes difficult topics, some that have focused the attention of the nation this past year and some as local as library fees. The in-depth reporting including freedom of information requests and lots of information broken into digestible, smoothly written segments. Faces of those affected are presented in compelling fashion."

3rd Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Julie Wurth. University of Illinois. "Julie Wurth had a target-rich environment, with the tumult at the University of Illinois, but she handles it with aplomb and with in-depth reporting and investigating. Stories show range from the executive suite to the dorm room."

Honorable Mention: Belleville News-Democrat, Brian Brueggemann. BND state government beat. "Brian Brueggemann does a great job of picking stories that matter to readers from the data of state government and then localizing those stories. Good, compelling writing."

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Dan Mihalopoulos. 5 stories on Chicago city government. "I'm very impressed with the range of coverage Dan has here. That's a lot for one person to pull off, but all of these stories are compelling and executed to perfection. The snow piece was fantastic and leaves me wondering how someone discovers such a great story. Bravo!"

2nd Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Rosalind Rossi. Transportation beat stories on O'Hare Airport expansion. "Excellent reporting. I was especially impressed with the information Rosalind gathered through FOIA requests and her sources. She dug beneath the surface to find the stories nobody else was reporting. Great work."

3rd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Laura Nightengale. Government Beat Reporting. "Laura shows great range in finding a variety of stories within the government beat. All very well written with excellent reporting. Keep it up!"

Honorable Mention: Chicago Sun-Times, Lauren FitzPatrick. 5 stories on the Chicago Public Schools. "This was a very tough category to judge, and I wish I could have given this more. Lauren's reporting and writing here is certainly worth more than honorable mention. She's not afraid to tackle the tough stories and she does it as well as any reporter out there."

CLASS 08 - BUSINESS/ECONOMIC REPORTING

Division A

1st Place: Ford County Record, Paxton, Will Brumleve. Plans for hog facility expansion outlined. "Well written article that delivers the information needed to the local populace."

2nd Place: Ford County Record, Paxton, Will Brumleve. Here to Stay. "Great article, except instead of except in paragraph 8. Details the challenges print media, especially in smaller communities have compared to their online counterparts."

3rd Place: Ford County Record, Paxton, Will Brumleve. B&B owner: 'Hate was not motive'. "Good article, no errors or omissions, high local interest and significance."

Honorable Mention: The Sidell Reporter, Suzanne Woodard. Library Week. "Bottom paragraph, second column, should be assistants not assistance. Otherwise written well and highlights a service within the community a lot of people forget about, libraries."

Division B

1st Place: The Prairie Press, Paris, Nancy Zeman. Great Heart Seed Company finds niche in market. "Great story."

2nd Place: Riverside-Brookfield Landmark, Bob Uphues. Keeping things sharp, the old-fashioned way. "Great story on a business model that was fairly common back in the 1970s, but I haven't seen in decades."

3rd Place: Mt. Carmel Register, T.J. Hug. New flower shop blooms early in town. "Very nice piece."

Honorable Mention: The Galena Gazette, Katie Devereaux. Jail Hill Inn. "Interesting use for an old jail."

Division D

1st Place: Morris Herald-News, Heidi Litchfield. The pros, cons of GMO. "This represents a balanced and clear approach to a complex and sometimes emotional issue."

2nd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Katie Dahlstrom. GE workers bid farewell to factory. "This is what business reporting should be -- how decisions made in the corporate suites affect people who work for the company."

3rd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Staff. 3M reaps tax breaks in relocation. "Overall, the coverage of this story did what news coverage is supposed to do -- question the use of taxpayer dollars. It would have been a stronger piece if it were clear from the get-go that somebody (the journalist, if no one else) objected to such secrecy when taxpayers' money is involved."

Honorable Mention: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Robert Connelly. Knoxville - City on the Grow. "Not your ordinary "progress edition" boosterism, but a very concrete study of a community with literal growing pains."

Division E

1st Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Debra Pressey. The big business of health care. "Wow, great reporting in the crucial, growing, lucrative health-care sector by Debra Pressy. She finds good faces for her stories and backs those up with solid, detailed, well written accounts."

2nd Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Johnathan Hettinger, Deb Pressey, Don Dodson. The cost of living in C-U. "Excellent reporting, well thought out and written, focusing on the economics and personal choices people make, and impacts on a community. What more could you ask for."

3rd Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Julie Wurth, Johnathan Hettinger. Cost of big-time college athletics. "Dig, dig, dig. These reporters do it well and then write stories that make the jaw drop open at the kind of money thrown around in bigtime college athletics."

Honorable Mention: The State Journal-Register, Springfield, Tim Landis. Pizza Lovin': New, old names compete for slice of local market. "Tim Landis has an infectious writing style that he backs up with great research and faces of the people affected. It was a toss-up between this one and his cell/landline submission."

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Tribune Media Group, Patricia Callahan. "Chemical Harvest" series. "Important reporting with planet-wide impact. My hat is off to Patricia Callahan's exhaustive work. Pulitzer?"

2nd Place: Chicago Tribune Media Group, Michael J. Berens, Ray Long. Billion Dollar Giveaway. “The jaw drops and the face forms an expression of horror at this misguided spending exposed by Berens and Long. Amazingly good, hard work. Amazing it didn't get Illinoisans in the streets with pitchforks and tar.”

3rd Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Tim Novak, Chris Fusco. Cinespace investigation, Tim Novak & Chris Fusco, Chicago Sun-Times. “Watchdogs Fusco and Novak get their teeth into this one, showing how the millions are thrown around in a seemingly mad quest for economic development. AND they get Ill. government to do something about it.”

Honorable Mention: Chicago Sun-Times, Tim Novak, Chris Fusco. McPier investigation. “Kudos to Fusco and Novak for pulling back the sheets on yet another incestuous business-government boondoggle in Chicago. They made it stink to high heaven, as it should.”

CLASS 09 - SPORTS NEWS

Division A

1st Place: LeRoy Farmer City Press, Jerry Nowicki. Panther comeback falls short. “Nothing lacking in the article. Having the Big Play Summary was a great addition, as was the top picture across the entire page.”

2nd Place: LeRoy Farmer City Press, Jerry Nowicki. Tri-Valley state title win. “Enjoyable article to read. Highlighted some of the action, but didn't go overboard. Interspersed with quotes was a great move. Nice side bar info as well.”

3rd Place: Elburn Herald, Ben Draper. Vanik hopes to go far in Fargo. “Great to see several quotes from the young man. An explanation of the different wrestling styles was a good move, as was including the area giving information on how to support the trip.”

Honorable Mention: Ford County Record, Paxton, Andrew Rosten. Bulletproof. “A lot of great information; breaking it into segments was the best way to go. Having a game summary was a nice touch.”

Division B

1st Place: Effingham & Teutopolis News Report, Steve Raymond. 3 Titles Keller. “This article does a nice job capturing the significance of the runner's performance in winning her third-straight cross country title. I liked the in-depth analysis explaining why she was able to complete the race in record time. It was very insightful, although a few of the quotes used were fairly generic. (‘It was a good race.’ ‘It means a lot.’)”

2nd Place: Wednesday Journal of Oak Park & River Forest, Marty Farmer. Huskies repeat as Class 3A state champs in wrestling. “Readers get a strong understanding of the pressure this wrestling team was under to live up to expectations and repeat as state champions. Good selection of quotes from coaches and players help readers see how strong team support helped the wrestlers push through the season.”

3rd Place: Rantoul Press, Brendan Quealy. Eagles walk off with regional win. “The writer does a good job explaining the dramatic rally in a way that readers can follow. Quotes from players and coaches bring us into the moment and give us insight into what exactly was happening on the field. I really liked

the explanation of how the team 'practiced' rallying from such a big deficit. Dropping the use of multiple sports clichés would have made the article even more enjoyable.”

Honorable Mention: Riverside-Brookfield Landmark, Bill Stone. Roadrunners' remarkable rally falls short. “I liked how the reporter took readers into the halftime locker-room to explain the team’s dramatic turnaround. Readers get a real sense of how positive the team was about its rally despite the loss.”

Division D

1st Place: Breeze-Courier, Taylorville, Owen Lasswell. Legends in Lawrenceville.

2nd Place: The Commercial-News, Danville, Chad Dare. Record spring for Trojans.

3rd Place: McDonough County Voice, Macomb, Scott Holland. Doyle’s three lifts Bombers to win.

Honorable Mention: The Commercial-News, Danville, Chad Dare. Completed business.

Division E

1st Place: Herald & Review, Decatur, Aren Dow. Riding through the snow. “Love the snow photos.”

2nd Place: Quincy Herald-Whig, Matt Schuckman and David Adam. Straight Shooter.

3rd Place: Herald & Review, Decatur, Aren Dow. Season Long Romp and Riding a wave of history to title.

Honorable Mention: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Joe Stevenson, Alex Kantecki and Jon Styf. Prairie Ridge vs Lake Forest football. “Great action shots to accompany copy.”

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Sports staff. 'Aw, split,' Chicago Sun-Times sports staff.

2nd Place: The Dispatch & The Rock Island Argus, Daniel Makarewicz. It's a "miracle" on turf. “Nice action shots”

3rd Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Sports staff. 'Next up: the Cup!'.

Honorable Mention: Chicago Tribune Media Group, Chris Kuc. Whatever world he is in, he's content.

CLASS 10 - SPORTS FEATURE

Division A

1st Place: Ford County Record, Paxton, Andrew Rosten. 'Today is yours'; 'You never gave up'; 'Look at the stands'. “A very complete look at what the team went through. Well written and understandable throughout. Pictures and presentation also good. A job well done.”

2nd Place: LeRoy Farmer City Press , Jerry Nowicki. A Father Son Storybook. “A very good treatment about a special team, coach and player. Makes you appreciate what dedication and hard work can lead

to for a group of young men. Not just your typical game story but a good look behind the scenes. Good job.”

3rd Place: Ford County Record, Paxton, Andrew Rosten. 'I'm thankful to be able to play'. “Very good story and written well. It makes the reader want to cheer for the young man and what he has gone through to live his dream. Can't think of a question that was not addressed and answered. Very nice piece.”

Honorable Mention: Elburn Herald, Cheryl Borrowdale. PGA's next big thing. “For those who love golf this story is for them. For others, this is a worthy read. Hopefully people understand the quality that must be maintained to draw major events. This tells it well.”

Division B

1st Place: Bureau County Republican, Princeton, Kevin Hieronymus. Taking a knee.

2nd Place: The Journal-News, Hillsboro, Kyle Herschelman. The Family That Races Together, Stays Together.

3rd Place: The Journal-News, Hillsboro, Kyle Herschelman. Marathon Dream Comes True For Erwin.

Honorable Mention: Rantoul Press, Brendan Quealy. Examining the Student-Athlete.

Division C

1st Place: Illinois Times, Springfield, Bruce Rushton. Take me out to the ballgame.

2nd Place: The Downers Grove Bugle, Scott Taylor. Hlavin looks for 2nd Title.

3rd Place: Illinois Times, Springfield, Patrick Yeagle. From Russia with gloves.

Division D

1st Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Staff. Best Streaks Ever.

2nd Place: McDonough County Voice, Macomb, Lainie Steelman. U. of Minn. beats ISU to become first-time regional Quidditch champs.

3rd Place: The Commercial-News, Danville, Chad Dare. Family affair.

Honorable Mention: Breeze-Courier, Taylorville, Kim Paisley. Believe you belong; a rookie's tale.

Division E

1st Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Staff. Life as a college athlete. “All I can say is, "Wow!" Lots of research and data went into creating this very thorough series. Lots to chew on, including many sidebars and graphics that helped tell the story efficiently.”

2nd Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Joe Stevenson. Wolfgang Kemp, homeless football player. “In a contest with many, many profile pieces, Kemp's story stood out. What an inspiration! The story was well-written, including details that may not have been the most comfortable to ask about.”

3rd Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Mike DeFabo. Training in McHenry County. “This story reminded me very much of the first place entry; lots of data, details and more. Nice job.”

Honorable Mention: Sauk Valley Media, Sterling, Staff. Track & Field 101. “Track and field. Not exactly the sexiest of prep sports to write about, but this explainer series was very interesting.”

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Tribune Media Group, Jared S. Hopkins. Welcome to the Dominican Republic: baseball mecca. “Well-written piece that shed light on a interesting aspect of MLB. Loved the ending.”

2nd Place: Chicago Tribune Media Group, Dan Wiederer. The book on FOX: Countdown to Bourbonnais. “Solid, comprehensive reporting! Loved the behind the scenes details in Chapter 1 and enjoyed the structure. Great feature that surely helped enlighten readers about the Bears' new coach. ”

3rd Place: Chicago Tribune Media Group, Chris Hine. Maddon's Mission. Cub's manager steps up to the plate. “There have been plenty of features written about Joe Maddon. Great job finding a unique angle and really giving readers a glimpse of where Maddon comes from.”

Honorable Mention: Journal Star, Peoria, Adam Duvall. A Leader and a Survivor. “Solid story about a great cause. Loved the lede.”

CLASS 11 - FEATURE WRITING

Division A

1st Place: Forest Park Review, Tom Holmes. One foot in Maywood, the other in Forest Park. “This demonstrates a way to tackle a difficult subject but not in a preachy way. Good use of sources and details.”

2nd Place: Forest Park Review, John Rice. Death comes to the cemetery. “This could easily have been written as a straight news story, but the author did a masterful job of getting the point across in a softer, more detailed way.”

3rd Place: LeRoy Farmer City Press , Jerry Nowicki. Team Tommy. “Crisp, clear writing. Good anecdotes. Good quotes. Variety of sources. Conveyed the message well that the community pulls together.”

Honorable Mention: Oakland Independent, Janice Hunt. 'NOT just a haircut'. “There were a lot of good entries in this category. This one is an example of a good read – even if you know nothing about the people featured.”

Division B

1st Place: Wednesday Journal of Oak Park & River Forest, Michael Romain. James Spearman's American Dream. “The reporter did a wonderful job bringing the life of James Spearman to the printed page.”

2nd Place: The Putnam County Record, Granville, Dave Cook. Another brick in the wall. “The headline fit well with the story. I really enjoyed this piece.”

3rd Place: Macoupin County Enquirer-Democrat, Carlinville, Misty Fritz. Local woman sews funeral gowns. "Great topic. I wish the reporter had taken the story a little further. I would have liked to learn more about how Cadmus' was affected by her niece's loss."

Honorable Mention: The Prairie Press, Paris, Gary Henry. A Wonderful Life. "This woman has an amazing life story. Great job capturing the era. Had the story been better organized this would have been a first place."

Division C

1st Place: Downers Grove Suburban Life, Renee Tomell. Four Shillings Short to display long musical reach. "This story is a fun read, and I became genuinely interested in the article."

2nd Place: The MidWeek, DeKalb, Katrina J.E. Milton. Gift of life.

3rd Place: The Downers Grove Bugle, Jonathan Samples. An open and affirmed faith. "This was a great way to find a local angle to a national story."

Honorable Mention: Valley Life, Sandwich, Katrina J.E. Milton. Lasting effect. "Great quotes."

Division D

1st Place: Pekin Daily Times, Robert Downen. 'Changing posts': The fight to keep veterans organizations open hits close to home. "There aren't many stories that one can read and feel all the feels. Knowing that our American heroes are selling away places that are important to them is heartbreaking. The reporter did a great job showing how soldiers from then and now are different and require different attentions. Top rate journalism."

2nd Place: Chicago Daily Law Bulletin, Jamie Loo. A clean start. "Wow, what a program. The personal stories are great, but it would flesh the story out to talk about the differences of a community without this or the statistical changes in the community since its implementation."

3rd Place: Morris Herald-News, Heidi Litchfield. Picking up the pieces. "You do not hear about how children cope after a disaster like a tornado. This is a great piece that has both first person accounts with support from professionals. Wonderful descriptions."

Honorable Mention: Chicago Daily Law Bulletin, Jack Silverstein. 24/7 for 20 years. "Great use of personal examples, statistics and overall intrigue. This service is needed throughout the country."

Division E

1st Place: Sauk Valley Media, Sterling, Christopher Heimerman. Honor Flight: Excellent reception. "This entry stood out in a crowded field of worthy features due to its effective presentation and storytelling. While Honor Flight stories are common, Christopher Heimerman highlights each and every veteran - putting a face and history to each one. The attention to detail in each story comprised in this well thought out package is commendable. A pleasure to read."

2nd Place: Rockford Register Star, Brian Leaf. The Catman of Mulberry Street. "This quirky story held my attention from start to finish. Writer Brian Leaf does a masterful job of telling Nick Parsons' often tragic story as a homeless addict who found redemption from a stray cat. Great read."

3rd Place: The Telegraph, Alton, Nathan Woodside. Gentle giant. “The design and accompanying video documentary helped this tribute to Robert Wadlow really shine. Great legwork by writer Nathan Woodside in tracking down a living classmate of Robert's to help provide firsthand insight into this kind, young man who was simply known to the rest of us as the World's Tallest Man. Well done.”

Honorable Mention: Belleville News-Democrat, Teri Maddox. Once upon a time in prison. “Writer Teri Maddox captures the pain and yearning of inmates trying to retain some connection with their children from behind prison walls. A nice balance of voices and perspectives. Nicely done.”

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Stefano Esposito. 'Evi & Walter: A love story in any key,' by Stefano Esposito, Chicago Sun-Times. “Stefano Esposito delivers a well crafted story pulling the reader in at the opening line and keeping them riveted until the end. The writer's effort in immersing himself in this couple's tale was well spent. Photographer Ashlee Rezin should also be commended for her work. The photos helped to make this piece sing. Excellent work.”

2nd Place: Chicago Tribune Media Group, Peter Nickeas. Kindness Toward Tyshawn. “Tyshawn Lee's family gives writer Peter Nickeas an incredible opportunity to weave a unique story about the personal cost of senseless violence - and he does not waste it. Well done.”

3rd Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Marie Wilson. When An Addict's Family Comes Second. “This may have not been the flashiest feature in this highly competitive class, but writer Marie Wilson's first-hand view of a family dealing with heroin addiction gives a very human face to a growing problem. Kudos.”

Honorable Mention: Chicago Sun-Times, Jon Seidel. 'That little basement saved everybody'. “Writer John Seidel's hustle to cover a town ravaged by a tornado produces a nice little story that packs a big punch. Great job.”

CLASS 12 - ORIGINAL COLUMN

Division A

1st Place: Forest Park Review, Tom Holmes. Three columns by Tom Holmes. “Displays an uncanny ability to support an opinion via a web of anecdotes and does so with a center of humility and empathy.”

2nd Place: Lebanon Advertiser, David Porter. Ramblin' Man. “Extraordinary sense of self; unapologetic selection of topics helps the reader feel the column is a personal conversation.”

3rd Place: Forest Park Review, Alan Brouillette. Three columns by Alan Brouillette. “Great use of alternative story formats to get a point across.”

Honorable Mention: The Leader, St. Joseph, Nora Maberry-Daniels. Column by Nora Maberry-Daniels. “Enjoyed where this column gets its musings. Both personal and community, this column reveals the place where the two intersect.”

Division B

1st Place: Cook County Chronicle, Chicago, Paul Sassone. Paul Sassone column. “Brief and engaging. These are informative with just the right amount of personal perspective to keep them from drying out.”

2nd Place: Lake County Journal, Grayslake, Judi Veoukas. Off the Deep End. “Creative and witty with a snappy cadence and a ironic sense of humor.”

3rd Place: Bureau County Republican, Princeton, Shannon Serpette. Columns by Shannon Serpette. “Introspective and conversational. Columns cover variety of topics of interest.”

Honorable Mention: The Galena Gazette, Hillary Dickerson. Column. “Great focus for columns on local issues.”

Division C

1st Place: The Downers Grove Bugle, Daniel Smrokowski. Special Voices. “Inspiring and generally well written. Best leads open with stories, as you do with two of these; avoid pegging your column to some artificial day or month that no one recognizes.”

2nd Place: Illinois Times, Springfield, Bruce Rushton. Cubs going to the World Series? One word: Fuhgeddaboutit. “Never, ever start a column with ‘There has been much talk...’ Also, the ending of the column should tie it all together rather than just fade off. But much of the writing was fun.”

3rd Place: Austin Weekly News, Chicago, Arlene Jones. Arlene Jones Columns. “Avoid pedestrian writing: ‘very’”

Division D

1st Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Tom Loewy. Tom Loewy columns. “The columnist's voice is also the voice of people seldom heard. This column is a treasure to readers.”

2nd Place: Pekin Daily Times, Robert Downen. Robert Downen column series. “There's strong insight here, particularly in the Lincoln column.”

3rd Place: The Daily Leader, Pontiac, Paul Westermeyer. original column (3). “It's ‘fewer’ votes, not ‘less.’ Otherwise, an impressive selection of hard-hitting columns, accomplished without the writer coming across as arrogant and self-important. Tighten the writing, and they'll be even better.”

Honorable Mention: Journal Gazette & Times-Courier, Mattoon, Penny Weaver. Penny Weaver columns. “This column's pretty good, in that it engages readers who are not from the newspaper's coverage area in key local issues, and adds light to local news.”

Division E

1st Place: The State Journal-Register, Springfield, Dave Bakke. Dave Bakke columns. “Great writing, fascinating topics, didn't want the column to end. Thanks, Dave.”

2nd Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Kevin P. Craver. Kevin Craver columns. “Wonderfully written columns are a treat for readers. Thanks, Kevin!”

3rd Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Michael Penkava. Just Humor Me. “Such fine, funny writing — a real treat for readers!”

Honorable Mention: Kane County Chronicle, St. Charles, Jennifer Dubose. 'Tales From the Motherhood' columns. "We found our new Erma Bombeck. Funny, well written and sentimental without being maudlin. A treat to read!"

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Mary Mitchell. Mary Mitchell, Chicago Sun-Times: 3 columns on the Laquan McDonald shooting and police use of force. "Powerful series. Very impactful."

2nd Place: The Dispatch & The Rock Island Argus, Roger Ruthhart. 15 years later ... / It's time for public schools .../ Public notice bill terrible for taxpayers. "Well-written. The column on Russian orphans was a particularly emotional story written simply and honestly. Thought-provoking."

3rd Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Neil Steinberg. Neil Steinberg, Chicago Sun-Times: 3 columns. "Good writing, unusual and intimate glimpses into other lives."

Honorable Mention: Journal Star, Peoria, Phil Luciano. Phil Luciano Column Writing. "The column on the Caterpillar firings was an eye-opening and personal look into a tragic day. The Veterans' Day column was very moving."

CLASS 13 - SPORTS COLUMN

Division A

1st Place: Ford County Record, Paxton, Andrew Rosten. PBL wins on, off playing fields; Making the community proud. "Reading the wrap-ups and rankings makes you wish you could have read this section all year. Writing is good and a great variety of subjects. This entry stands out in a good class to judge."

2nd Place: Cass County Star-Gazette, Beardstown, Don Chipman. Chip's Corner.

Division B

1st Place: Bureau County Republican, Princeton, Kevin Hieronymus. Kevin Hieronymus columns. "This entry includes columns which are well researched and equally well written. It takes time to gather information and put in in good readable order which is what this writer does well. The columns stand alone which is what the writer should hope for when presenting them to the reader. Good job."

2nd Place: The Journal-News, Hillsboro, Kyle Herschelman. Center and Guard. "Very emotional writing about a very hard subject close to the writer's heart. Not overdone at all and are columns that any reader could identify with. Wish the family luck with what they deal with and encourage the writing about the fight to continue."

3rd Place: The Reporter, Hickory Hills, Jeff Vorva. Three sports columns from Jeff Vorva. "The subject on the little league is something that made national headlines and deserves to be investigated which is what this writer did. The other two columns are equally well done and interesting. All the writing is top shelf. A good job."

Honorable Mention: Wednesday Journal of Oak Park & River Forest, Marty Farmer. "I never got to see him play". "This is a hard column to write and one you wish did not have to be written. But when

something like this happens and the story needs to be told, this is one of the best when it comes to approach and compassion. A nice piece.”

Division D

1st Place: The Commercial-News, Danville, Chad Dare. Gordon's final lap begins at Daytona.

2nd Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Mike Trueblood. Mike Trueblood sports columns.

3rd Place: Paris Beacon-News, Thomas Hardesty. The Penalty Box.

Division E

1st Place: The Times, Ottawa, J.T. Pedelty. The Pedelty Box.

2nd Place: The Herald-News, Joliet, Dick Goss. From the Sports Desk.

3rd Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Mike DeFabo. Mike DeFabo columns.

Honorable Mention: Sauk Valley Media, Sterling, Brian Weidman. Links With Locals.

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Tribune Media Group, Steve Rosenbloom. 1. Stan Mikita: An appreciation
2.Appreciating Derrick Rose's special 3. Patrick Kane supporters.

2nd Place: Chicago Tribune Media Group, David Haugh. 1.Smiling and crying 2. Unquestionably a mistake 3. Lift off.

3rd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Phil Luciano. Phil Luciano Sports Columns.

Honorable Mention: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Barry Rozner. Barry Rozner Columns.

CLASS 14 - PHOTO SERIES

Division A

1st Place: Elburn Herald, Laura Gampfer. Weekend drive at Elburn Days. “Good job of capturing the variety of activities that took place at the event. Photos were crisp and colorful.”

2nd Place: Coal City Courant, Staff. Coal City tornado photos. “Good job of capturing the destruction of the tornado. The time factor was also impressive.”

3rd Place: Ford County Record, Paxton, Andrew Rosten, Ryan Ferguson. Out of reach; 'Look at the stands'. “Good mix of action photos, crowd photos, and sideline photos.”

Honorable Mention: Lebanon Advertiser, David Porter, Donna Wood. School demo. “Liked the use of taking some of the photos from above. Also liked the fact you take a night photo and didn't rely on a one-time photo shoot.”

Division B

1st Place: Republic-Times, Waterloo, John Spytek. Summer T-ball Action. "T-ball with kids isn't easy, and though you had a couple average photos, you had enough good 'ball' photos to place first."

2nd Place: Bureau County Republican, Princeton, Mike Vaughn, Dave Cook. Shadows of the Blue and Gray. "A few good candid photos here, could have used a few more with expression."

3rd Place: The Journal-News, Hillsboro, Mary (Galer) Herschelman. Cardboard Boat Regatta. "This appears tricky as photos seem to be taken from land, some good candid."

Honorable Mention: The Greenville Advocate, Dave Bell. Presenting The Messiah. "Done simply, not too busy, two of the four are striking, a couple of small group shots would have helped placing."

Division C

1st Place: Austin Weekly News, Chicago, William Camargo. Sandra Bland's Funeral. "Way to have courage and permission to shoot this."

2nd Place: Austin Weekly News, Chicago, William Camargo. Amari Brown. "Very strong subject, photos up close but not a lot of expression."

3rd Place: Illinois Times, Springfield, Patrick Yeagle. Return of the mighty mustang. "Right idea in showing face of horses, up close would have helped."

Honorable Mention: Downers Grove Suburban Life, Bill Ackerman. Grove Fest. "Couple of nice excited shots but not enough for higher placing."

Division D

1st Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Danielle Guerra and Monica Synett. Fairdale tornado. "A varied selection of images, including couple nice aerial photos. The series becomes a little disjointed at the end."

2nd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Danielle Guerra. Special Olympians prepare for competition. "A couple nice moments. Several photos could have benefited from better composition and tighter cropping."

3rd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Danielle Guerra. Flashover fire training. "A few nice photos throughout the series. The focus on some photos is soft. Some photos are too similar -- could be edited down to a solid 7-8 photos."

Honorable Mention: Paris Beacon-News, Beth Durreman. The Giving Tree. "The series successfully shows what's taking place, but could benefit from a few better composed images. A couple photos are unneeded."

Division E

1st Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Sarah Nader. Gliniewicz.

2nd Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Matthew Apgar. Military funeral for Kevin Mose Weiss. "The level of access helped provide for images not always seen from a military funeral."

3rd Place: Quincy Herald-Whig, Phil Carlson. Transitions. "It's evident that time was spent with the Coons family. A collection of well shot photos that paired well with the story."

Honorable Mention: The Herald-News, Joliet, Eric Ginnard and Lathan Goumas. Coal City Tornado. "A nice set of photos showing the collective community efforts in the aftermath of the tornado. Would have been nice to have seen a few personal moments during the cleanup efforts."

Division F

1st Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Fred Zwicky. Troutman's Trek. "A solid series with a few gems. The image of Troutman at his wife's graveside set this series apart from the rest. Great image!"

2nd Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Ashlee Rezin. 'Evi & Walter: A love story in any key'. "Enjoyed this series. I was a little bit confused why certain photos in print were not included in the submitted series. Felt a couple not included were stronger."

3rd Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Ashlee Rezin. Rochelle tornado devastation. "A small series that could have benefited from more time spent with those involved with the tornado."

CLASS 15 - SPOT NEWS PHOTO

Division A

1st Place: Oakland Independent, Janice Hunt. Wind-fueled fire destroys rural home. "This photo does an excellent job of capturing the moment. It is very clear and colorful."

2nd Place: The Vienna Times, Lonnie Hinton. Allie's Crash in Vienna. "This photo makes me feel like I'm standing right there. The state of the vehicles combined with the rain in the photo create an appropriately devastating mood."

3rd Place: Clinton Journal, Gordon Woods. Rocky the bulldog skateboards. "This photo is fun - the dog's expression makes me smile. It is crisp, clear and colorful. Certainly not something you see every day."

Honorable Mention: The Lexingtonian, Tim Lindenbaum, Laurie Sleeter. Tornado. "This photo clearly expresses the imminent danger of a funnel cloud. While not colorful, the black and white seems to contribute to the mood of the scene."

Division B

1st Place: The Journal-News, Hillsboro, James Ryan. Saturday Fire Consumes Nokomis Shed.

2nd Place: Rantoul Press, Linda Kelley. Sunrise over Rantoul.

3rd Place: Macoupin County Enquirer-Democrat, Carlinville, Jan Dona. Two teens involved in wreck.

Honorable Mention: North County News, Red Bud, Mary Koester. Geese at Baldwin Lake.

Division C

1st Place: Austin Weekly News, Chicago, William Camargo. Chicago Violence.

2nd Place: Jersey County Journal, Jerseyville, Michael R. Weaver. Elsay house fire.

3rd Place: Jersey County Journal, Jerseyville, Bob Crossen. Gone with the wind.

Honorable Mention: Austin Weekly News, Chicago, William Camargo. Emergency Vigil for Chicago Violence.

Division D

1st Place: Robinson Daily News, Tom Compton. Derby rescue. "The photographer is able to capture the moment from the bent metal in the foreground to the expression of the rescue worker in the background this photo comes to life. The focus isn't on the injured woman, but the coordinated effort of the team helping her. Great framing, color and focus."

2nd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Danielle Guerra. GE plant closes. "This picture captures a moment in a man's life when his career has come to an end not by his choice. The isolation of the man from the GE plant is emphasized by him wheeling out the tools of his trade on a cold gloomy day with the long wire fence ready to close forever behind him. A great visual story."

3rd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Danielle Guerra. Path of destruction. "This picture brings home the deadly destruction of a tornado. Words can't describe the story the picture tells."

Honorable Mention: Journal Gazette & Times-Courier, Mattoon, Dave Fopay. Richmond Avenue fire. "The photographer did a nice job framing this shot. You have street location black smoke and flame surrounded by blue sky and green trees. An unfortunate outcome for the home owner but great color and clarity of fire picture."

Division E

1st Place: Belleville News-Democrat, Derik Holtmann. Gone girl found. "A conflict of feelings on this photo, troubled youth found safe and rescued, great relief yet she's not being carried comfortably."

2nd Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, John Dixon. Nowhere to run. "Very dangerous position for photographer to be in, great courage for a 'got it' photo."

3rd Place: The Telegraph, Alton, John Badman. Suspects surrender. "True spot news photo, and though this could be very dangerous for the photographer, the look on his face makes light of it, imagine."

Honorable Mention: The State Journal-Register, Springfield, Ted Schurter. In good hands. "Right spot, exact moment, closer to subject may have raised this placing."

Division F

1st Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, John Starks. Tornado's Haunting Aftermath. "This tornado made national news and this photo really captures the devastation and desolation of the area. It's haunting."

2nd Place: The Dispatch & The Rock Island Argus, Paul Colletti. React to verdict. "Court houses can be very emotional places. The photo captures the heartbreak of a family whose world has changed."

3rd Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Ashlee Rezin. A woman reacts to a fatal shooting on Chicago's South Side. "This photo is heartbreaking and really tells a story."

Honorable Mention: Journal Star, Peoria, David Zalaznik. Car Wash. "What a crazy photo. The store owner is upset about what has happened and this photo really shows that."

CLASS 16 - GENERAL NEWS PHOTO

Division A

1st Place: Oakland Independent, Janice Hunt. Barber gives great-grandson his first haircut. "Nicely composed. There's a story in this photo that feels very relatable."

2nd Place: Berwyn Suburban Life, Bill Ackerman. Group hug. "Photo captures great mixed emotions."

3rd Place: LeRoy Farmer City Press, Jerry Nowicki. Rebels Retreat. "Great action captured. Crisp image."

Honorable Mention: Arcola Record-Herald, David Porter. Fireman silhouette. "Nicely timed photo. Well composed."

Division B

1st Place: Mason County Democrat, Havana, Bob Martin. Labor Day Weekend Flying Carp. "Amazing."

2nd Place: Lake County Journal, Grayslake, Candace H. Johnson. Rodeo photo. "This rates."

3rd Place: Glenview Journal, Dan Wessell. Bubbles! "Nice."

Honorable Mention: The Putnam County Record, Granville, Shannon Serpette. Field of Dreams. "A contender."

Division C

1st Place: Jersey County Journal, Jerseyville, Mark Pace. Ready at the gate.

2nd Place: Jersey County Journal, Jerseyville, Bob Crossen. Honoring our fallen soldiers.

3rd Place: Downers Grove Suburban Life, Mark Busch. Election night with the mayor.

Honorable Mention: Austin Weekly News, Chicago, William Camargo. Black Friday Protest.

Division D

1st Place: Morris Herald-News, Heidi Litchfield. Hot Rods.

2nd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Danielle Guerra. Veteran's salute.

3rd Place: Lake County News-Sun, Gurnee, Brian O'Mahoney. 911 Ceremony.

Honorable Mention: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Steve Davis. MLK Day March.

Division E

1st Place: Herald & Review, Decatur, Jim Bowling. Farm Progress Show. “Great composition. I love the contradiction of older farmers using their smart phones to capture new farming technology. Very thought provoking and appropriate to the editorial subject.”

2nd Place: Sauk Valley Media, Sterling, Philip Marruffo. Trying his luck. “Beautiful picture! Perfect exposure. Great use of depth of field. I appreciate the edgy angle at which this was shot as well, I think that's what made the photo for me.”

3rd Place: Quincy Herald-Whig, Phil Carlson. Lewis County Fair. “Great contrast.”

Honorable Mention: The Herald-News, Joliet, Eric Ginnard. Memorial Day. “Great snapshot of emotion.”

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Ashlee Rezin. 'Goodbye to a fallen firefighter'. “Great depth of field.”

2nd Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Steve Lundy. Shooting Protest.

3rd Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Ashlee Rezin. Rocking out at Riot Fest. “Good photo. A little cliché though.”

Honorable Mention: Journal Star, Peoria, Fred Zwicky. Whole World in his Hands.

CLASS 17 - FEATURE PHOTO

Division A

1st Place: Oakland Independent, Janice Hunt. The pool's so fun, you'll flip. “Great moment caught on film.”

2nd Place: Barrington Courier-Review, Brian O'Mahoney. Little Big Fan. “Wonderful expression really draws the viewer in.”

3rd Place: Cass County Star-Gazette, Beardstown, David V. Miller. Geese taking off from corn field. “Seasons change so much in the Midwest, and one way to keep track of that is through the yearly bird migrations. Great to catch this huge flock of geese to mark the passage of time.”

Honorable Mention: LeRoy Farmer City Press, Jerry Nowicki. Memorial Day Taps. “We've all felt the power of ‘Taps’ and this photo captures that powerful feeling without sound.”

Division B

1st Place: Bureau County Republican, Princeton, Mike Vaughn. MudCross Challenge. “This entry covers the gamut of criteria – good subject, composition of photography, originality and technical skill.”

2nd Place: The Greenville Advocate, Bill Walker. The Thrill of the Fair. “Photos of children on rides at the fair are commonplace, but in this one, you can feel the fun they're having. Well done.”

3rd Place: Republic-Times, Waterloo, Alan Dooley. Piano Star in the Making. “Children are often the focus of the best photos. This one is no exception. Again, all four criteria are exemplified.”

Honorable Mention: The Prairie Press, Paris, Christian Colvin. Lighting of the Christmas Tree. “Christmas photos at night are never easy, but this entry is one everyone would love to have on their front page. The building in the background makes it even more of a difficult photo to shoot, while still keeping the tree in focus.”

Division C

1st Place: Austin Weekly News, Chicago, William Camargo. Life on the West Side of Chicago. “Nice job capturing a moment of childhood joy.”

2nd Place: Austin Weekly News, Chicago, William Camargo. Father's Day in the West Side of Chicago.

3rd Place: Austin Weekly News, Chicago, Sebastian Hidalgo. Life in the West Side of Chicago.

Honorable Mention: Downers Grove Suburban Life, Bill Ackerman. Boo fest.

Division D

1st Place: Journal Gazette & Times-Courier, Mattoon, Kevin Kilhoffer. Fireworks. “Great composition and excellent color. This photo has a lot of great elements.”

2nd Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Steve Davis. Parade on Main Street. “We've all seen a lot of typical parade photos. Good job making this one stand out from the rest!”

3rd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Danielle Guerra. Yellow cello.

Honorable Mention: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Steve Davis. SUNDOGS.

Division E

1st Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Matthew Apgar. Half-submerged. “This was an incredibly difficult category to judge. Many, many, many great photos. This photo is a standout for several reasons. The facial expression, the composition, the difficulty of getting the shot, etc. Wonderful work!”

2nd Place: NewsTribune, La Salle, Scott Anderson. Say No To Drugs Fun Day. “Great job getting this shot at the exact right split second! The action was stopped perfectly.”

3rd Place: The Pantagraph, Bloomington, David Proeber. Blood moon. “Beautiful job. The blood moon is clear as day and the grain elevator is perfectly lit to make the shot work.”

Honorable Mention: The Times, Ottawa, Tom Sistik. Faired Out. “This photo was cute, fun and made me smile. I loved it!”

Division F

1st Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Jeff Knox. Jet in Eclipse. “Excellent job in making a familiar photo an extraordinary one. Great composition.”

2nd Place: The Dispatch & The Rock Island Argus, Todd Welvaert. Near perfect night. “What an incredible moment to capture. Great job. This photo really evokes emotions!”

3rd Place: The Dispatch & The Rock Island Argus, Todd Mizener. Bill Murray golfs, entertains. “Good job capturing a fun moment with a notorious character.”

Honorable Mention: Journal Star, Peoria, Matt Dayhoff. Dummy Jump.

CLASS 18 - PERSONALITY PORTRAIT

Division A

1st Place: LeRoy Farmer City Press , Serah Welborn. Mary Maude Humphrey. “The expressiveness of the subject’s eyes invoke a kindness and add an emotional tone to the image. I find the composition pleasing. The furniture and pillow seem very much in place in the photograph.”

2nd Place: Forest Park Review, Chandler West. Bonsai Trees. “I appreciate the movement and warmth of the image. Good use of natural light. Would have liked to have seen the subject offset in the image more to the right to emphasize the movement.”

3rd Place: Lebanon Advertiser, David Porter. Mike Neary Plein Air event. “The color, expressiveness and concentration depicted in the image stand out. Nice job avoiding overly strong shadows with difficult light. Composition may have been better cropped more tightly horizontally. The shutters in the background are very distracting and create a competing line.”

Honorable Mention: Forest Park Review, William Camargo. Violin portrait. “Love the environment for this portrait and the soft colors. Being centered in the frame makes the subject look too much like a snapshot. If the subject was a little more offset in the image, this would have been a stronger portrait.”

Division B

1st Place: The Galena Gazette, Katie Devereaux. Baking care of business. “This portrait does what every good portrait should – lets the subject’s personality shine, showing the person in his or her element. Very strong composition and use of motion and color.”

2nd Place: Wednesday Journal of Oak Park & River Forest, William Camargo. Dequawn portrait. “Good use of light and shadow to pull viewers into the portrait. The simple, bemused expression, is very effective. Might have liked it even more cropped into a strong vertical image.”

3rd Place: Republic-Times, Waterloo, Alan Dooley. Veteran Reflects on Korean War. “This portrait tells a great deal about the subject’s story. Nicely posed for the most part, but the photo turned toward the mirror feels a little contrived and the empty space in the middle draws my eye too much.”

Honorable Mention: Riverside-Brookfield Landmark, William Camargo. Marine Veteran. “The shadows from the sunlight through the window work well with the subject’s expression and the stark background to create a contemplative mood for this portrait. The more I look at it, the more I like it.”

Division C

1st Place: Illinois Times, Springfield, Patrick Yeagle. Rooting out systemic racism. “At a time when racism (read Donald Trump) seems to be rearing its ugly head this is an upbeat look from another angle.”

2nd Place: Austin Weekly News, Chicago, William Camargo. Musicians on the West Side. “Kids and music. You can't go wrong.”

3rd Place: Downers Grove Suburban Life, Mark Busch. Just brew it. “Whimsical! I love it.”

Honorable Mention: Austin Weekly News, Chicago, William Camargo. Renna Thomas eviction portrait.

Division D

1st Place: Pekin Daily Times, Robert Downen. 'Strong body, strong mind'. "Well composed. Nice use of a dark background."

2nd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Danielle Guerra. Man recovers after losing limbs. "Photo captures emotion very well."

3rd Place: The Daily Leader, Pontiac, Joy Butler. Helping to remember those who had fallen. "Very nicely composed."

Honorable Mention: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Danielle Guerra. Spirit grandma. "Fun, enthusiastic photo. Interestingly composed."

Division E

1st Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Sarah Nader. Family Hugs. "Spontaneous and natural feeling captured in this photograph."

2nd Place: Sauk Valley Media, Sterling, Philip Marruffo. Piercing. "Striking photo."

3rd Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, John Dixon. Big Man on Campus.

Honorable Mention: The Herald-News, Joliet, Eric Ginnard. Player of the Year. "Interesting, unusual perspective. Nice action."

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Ashlee Rezin. Walter Levin: keeping the music alive. "Wow. The photographer really managed to capture a phenomenal moment here. This image truly helps the reader better understand the challenges and experiences of Mr. Levin."

2nd Place: The Dispatch & The Rock Island Argus, Meg McLaughlin. Says goodbye. "Incredible composition—this heartbreaking image really tells the story."

3rd Place: The Dispatch & The Rock Island Argus, Gary Krambeck. Color on wheels. "The story's subject is truly reflected in his work through this portrait. Unique and artistic!"

Honorable Mention: Chicago Sun-Times, Ashlee Rezin. 'Evi & Walter: A love story in any key'.

CLASS 19 - SPORTS PHOTO

Division A

1st Place: Elburn Herald, Mary Paulson. No break. "This is surreal, the runner upside down is a great capture."

2nd Place: Mahomet Citizen, Garrett Halm. Through his fingers. "Excellent timing, ball in mid air between 3 pair of hands."

3rd Place: LeRoy Farmer City Press , Jerry Nowicki. Bryce Dooley Flyin' High. "Two defenders, and your facing the diving runner."

Honorable Mention: The Courier, Carterville, William Bateman. Softball celebration. "the girl jumping for joy says it all."

Division B

1st Place: Republic-Times, Waterloo, John Spytek. Making a Splash. "The details in the photo are so vivid. Looking at the photo, I feel like I'm standing right there. The sand and hair flying, the subject's facial expressions and the clarity make the photo stand out."

2nd Place: Republic-Times, Waterloo, Alan Dooley. Happy Home Run Trot. "The photographer did a great job of capturing the expressions on the players' faces. The photo is clear and colorful."

3rd Place: Rantoul Press, Brendan Quealy. Eagles and Trojans In Total Mudbath. "This photo is crisp and original. The water flying through the air helps convey the impact of the tackle."

Honorable Mention: The Journal-News, Hillsboro, Kyle Herschelman. Niemann Raises The Bar For LHS Leapers. "The photographer captured a shot that stands out due to originality. The athlete's expression and body positioning make this photo stand out. It is colorful and clear."

Division C

1st Place: Downers Grove Suburban Life, Mark Busch. Safe! "The expression on the umpire's face, coupled with the dirt being kicked up, portray an exciting scene. The photo is clear and colorful."

2nd Place: Downers Grove Suburban Life, Mark Busch. Celebrate. "This photo shows the raw emotion on the player's face with clarity."

3rd Place: Austin Weekly News, Chicago, Staff. Westinghouse High School Foobtall. "The players' expressions portray the exhaustion that hits at the end of a sporting event. The photo is colorful and offers a unique angle."

Honorable Mention: Downers Grove Suburban Life, Mark Busch. Going up. "The clarity of this action shot is what stands out to me."

Division D

1st Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Steve Davis. Cruising Way Ahead of the Pack. "I absolutely love this photo. Josh's yellow shirt shines brighter than the others, and with his lead over the pack, the others are out of focus, making Josh really pop. Excellent job!"

2nd Place: The Courier-News, Elgin, Brian O'Mahoney. Game Winning Hit. "The faces make this photo, and the photographer did a great job being in the right place and snapping the shot at the right time."

3rd Place: Lake County News-Sun, Gurnee, Brian O'Mahoney. Cheek to Cheek. "Caught the action at the perfect moment. Fantastic job."

Honorable Mention: The Courier-News, Elgin, Brian O'Mahoney. Play at the Plate. "Perfect position for a great photo."

Division E

1st Place: The State Journal-Register, Springfield, Justin L. Fowler. Anchor leg. “Fantastic emotion. The runner's baton just beyond her hand combined with her position and facial expression brings me into the moment.”

2nd Place: Sauk Valley Media, Sterling, Philip Marruffo. Dive. “This is a well-captured moment of action and suspense. A slightly straighter crop would have enhanced the composition.”

3rd Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, H. Rick Bamman. Missed Opportunity. “The player's gaze and strained reach show how close this player was to catching the ball. This photo brings to mind gasps of hopeful fans in the stadium.”

Honorable Mention: Quincy Herald-Whig, Michael Kipley. Outfield collision. “This is a well-timed shot of a chaotic moment in the outfield. The player's hat flying off is fun to see.”

Division F

1st Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Steve Lundy. Mixed Emotions. “The range of emotions in the faces is great! The shot could even be slightly tighter.”

2nd Place: Chicago Tribune Media Group, Brian O'Mahoney. 200 Freestyle State Champion. “Nice job at capturing the swimmer at the height of celebration. I feel the color balance is a bit off.”

3rd Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, John Starks. Battle In The Corner. “Pulls the viewer into the close, gritty action of a hockey match.”

Honorable Mention: Chicago Tribune Media Group, Brian O'Mahoney. Softball State Champs. “Not a new angle, but still nicely captured. Good job.”

CLASS 20 - EDITORIAL CARTOON

Division B

1st Place: Wednesday Journal of Oak Park & River Forest, Marc Stopeck. Disgruntled former village hall employees. “Nice job giving the reader a bit of perspective.”

2nd Place: Wednesday Journal of Oak Park & River Forest, Marc Stopeck. Locals pay homage to the fallen artists of Charlie Hebdo. “Effective and original approach to honoring Charlie Hebdo artists.”

3rd Place: Riverside-Brookfield Landmark, Marc Stopeck. Supreme court news on gay marriage and Obamacare. “Nice job driving your point home.”

Honorable Mention: Pike Press, Pittsfield, Bill Beard. Highest spot in Pike County. “Made me laugh out loud. Clever.”

Division E

1st Place: Belleville News-Democrat, Glenn McCoy. Paris 911. “Powerful and original response to the Paris terrorists attacks.”

2nd Place: Belleville News-Democrat, Glenn McCoy. Marital Bliss. “Very clever. Definitely made me laugh.”

3rd Place: The Telegraph, Alton, Nathan Woodside. Strength in numbers. “Great job at effectively telling the story and taking a strong position.”

Honorable Mention: Belleville News-Democrat, Glenn McCoy. The Ladies' Man.

CLASS 21 - ILLUSTRATION

Division B

1st Place: Bureau County Republican, Princeton, Becky Kramer. Moon. “Impressive considering how difficult it can be to shoot photos at night. The illustration provided readers with a sense of what they missed if they didn't stay awake for it.”

2nd Place: The Galena Gazette, Jay Dickerson. Train derailment timeline. “The timeline helped the reader see the sequence of events at a glance. This is sometimes difficult to provide if all the information is in story form. If they wanted more information they could read further in the story.”

3rd Place: Republic-Times, Waterloo, Staff. Proposed dog park illustration. “It was a clever way to give readers an idea of the layout of proposed dog park. The use of cartoon-look dogs added a flair of fun to it.”

Honorable Mention: Effingham & Teutopolis News Report, Herb Meeker; Lisa Eirhart. A Hero Remembered. “Using the photo and wrapping the text around it was a good way to draw the reader to the story.”

Division D

1st Place: Downers Grove Suburban Life, Erica Benson, Mark Busch. Ready to run. “Having just the runner in color helps draw attention to the photo. And that is what the goal is.”

2nd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Danielle Guerra. Girls track athlete of the year. “Nice and crisp and colorful. Makes the reader wonder how it was created.”

3rd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Danielle Guerra. Green Christmas. “Frosty may have melted but he still looks happy!”

Honorable Mention: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Danielle Guerra. Telepressure. “Photo does a good job of relaying ‘telepressure.’”

Division E

1st Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Lincoln Delporte. Downtown development. “Artwork is incredible. So creative. Great idea to showcase each business.”

2nd Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Scott Helmchen. Powdered alcohol. “Excellent graphics. Layout and artwork is very clean.”

3rd Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Lyncoln Delporte. Medical marijuana in Urbana. “Very creative and very attention getting. It truly makes you want to read the article.”

Honorable Mention: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Scott Helmchen. Cyberbullying. “Love the graphic. Very creative.”

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Max Rust, Dan Mihalopoulos. 'What the city payroll looks like — in color'. “Very colorful and organized”

2nd Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Max Rust. 'CPS presidents: Some highs and lows'. “Very creative and colorful. Love the chalkboard look.”

3rd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Michael Anthony Noel. Road Music. “Very colorful and eye catching.”

Honorable Mention: Journal Star, Peoria, Michael Anthony Noel. Home, Sweet Home.

CLASS 22 - INFORMATIONAL GRAPHIC

Division A

1st Place: Mahomet Citizen, Amelia Benner. Cookiegraph. “Very original idea to use each type of cookie in the pie chart. An attention grabber.”

2nd Place: Forest Park Review, Claire Innes, John Rice. Forest Park Review Cemetery Graphic. “The graphics used help draw attention to the story.”

Division B

1st Place: Macoupin County Enquirer-Democrat, Carlinville, Jamie Winchester. Twice as Nice.

2nd Place: The Galena Gazette, Jay Dickerson. Train derailment timeline.

3rd Place: Wednesday Journal of Oak Park & River Forest, Jacquinete Baldwin, Ken Trainor. Oak Park Sports History.

Honorable Mention: Glen Ellyn Suburban Life, Jes Spivak. Road repairs.

Division C

1st Place: Shorewood Sentinel, Shelley Holmgren. Weathering the Storm.

2nd Place: Elmhurst Suburban Life, Jes Spivak. Touring homes.

3rd Place: Downers Grove Suburban Life, Dave Lemery. Tollway speeds.

Division D

1st Place: Pekin Daily Times, Robert Downen, Michael Smothers. Ready for winter weather? “Provides clarity of the story, could stand alone if necessary.”

2nd Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Staff. Domestic Violence Checkup. “Graphic is a proper size, packs the information in the correct manner, and provides the quick punch a visual should.”

3rd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Nick Gerts. Huskie Stadium average attendance. “The graphic offers a proper visual of the story, but isn’t very original.”

Honorable Mention: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Staff. Where domestic violence cases exit. “The graphic is incomplete in my opinion. Instead of lumping dropped cases AND convictions together, they should have been separate categories. The clarity of the graphic would have been greater separating those items.”

Division E

1st Place: The Daily Journal, Kankakee, Dave Dressler. Halloween Candy Info-Graphic.

2nd Place: Quincy Herald-Whig, Haley Stracher. Legionnaire's: What you need to know. “Very organized and clean. Very creative.”

3rd Place: The Daily Journal, Kankakee, Dave Dressler. Home Alone Info-Graphic. “Very organized and clean. Colors look great together.”

Honorable Mention: The Daily Journal, Kankakee, Dave Dressler. Chi-raq Info-Graphic. “Very clean and attention getting.”

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Max Rust. War memorials across Chicago. “Nicely organized. Great artwork with a lot of information.”

2nd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Scott Adrian Hinton. Caterpillar new headquarters. “Love the Caterpillar colors. Very clean & organized. Easy to read. Very well done.”

3rd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Michael Anthony Noel. NCAA Rule Changes. “Great graphic. Great way to take pictures and put them into art.”

Honorable Mention: Chicago Sun-Times, Max Rust. The Geographic Fallacy of 'Chiraq'. “Very clean and very creative.”

CLASS 23 - SINGLE PAGE DESIGN

Division A

1st Place: Arcola Record-Herald, David Porter. Arcola wrapping paper. “Great page design and a clever idea.”

2nd Place: LeRoy Farmer City Press, Jerry Nowicki, Serah Welborn. Spirit of Simeon West. “The use of the cutout was a creative way to separate the two articles.”

3rd Place: Berwyn Suburban Life, Joe Zenkel. History lesson.

Honorable Mention: Pinckneyville Press, Chrissy Hagene, Jeff Egbert. Tragedy Lights Up the Night - June 17, 2015. "Great front page photo of the fire."

Division B

1st Place: The Galena Gazette, Jay Dickerson. Train derails south of Galena, causes oil fire. "What happened? Where and when? You get all of that in this spread from the Gazette. May have been able to lose one or two of the minor images to let others get larger, but looked to balance images and story when either could overwhelm."

2nd Place: Riverside-Brookfield Landmark, Staff. Falling for giraffes. "This is just a beautiful spread of pages. It does everything right - one large photograph on the lead page, playful headline, story content not overwhelming the space. Nice infographic and pull-quote. May get redundant with same subjects in multiple photos, but makes it entertaining by having 'close-up' circle in the middle."

3rd Place: The Prairie Press, Paris, Libby Roerig. Let them mail cake. "Page is appealing because it stays on the right side of having graphic gimmicks, and letting headlines be so big you cannot ignore them."

Honorable Mention: Lake County Journal, Grayslake, Jes Spivak. Lake County Fair page. "What this spread does that several entries in the category failed to do is to take a handful of the best photos, and let them shine as big as they possibly can. Its hard to let great photos sit unseen on the drive, but that is what is required so others may shine."

Division C

1st Place: The Downers Grove Bugle, Shelley Holmgren. Combating the flu. "Tough category as entries vary greatly. Bugle wins with great graphics/design all around, from page information, to category/column banners, to breaking up information in graphics, instead of a story."

2nd Place: Downers Grove Suburban Life, Staff. Sweet stuff. "Suburban Life has the perfect formula for their front cover - focus on a great photo, have the headline capture the essence of the story, then lead to the text."

3rd Place: The Downers Grove Bugle, Shelley Holmgren. Westmont takes to the street. "Very colorful design. The masthead and inside elements legible and not overwhelming. The lead-in to the Westmont Street Fair story may have squeezed one or so too many elements into the lead. With so many great subjects, its tough to choose, but elements mean they all have to be smaller, losing their impact. The graphics framing it all are impressive."

Honorable Mention: Downers Grove Suburban Life, Jes Spivak, Logan Zimmerman. A holiday tradition. "Nice, clean design invites reader."

Division D

1st Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Staff. Sifting through the Wreckage. "This is a powerful news page, it's simple and well organized and uses strong images to promote thorough news coverage of the traumatic impact of the storm. Very effective design."

2nd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Inger Koch. On stage at Corn Fest. "Creativity, simplicity and good use of color make this page design stand out. The corn graphic is a lot more interesting that a handful of photos of bands would have been."

3rd Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Staff. In Our Hands. “This is another simple, but powerful page design. Nice use of typography and stark imagery to create a tone for the opening of a series. As much as I like the page, I’m not sure an open hand makes me think of the topic of the series (domestic violence).”

Honorable Mention: Paris Beacon-News, Christopher Morrical. Brett's Tribute. “I really like the centerpiece design, with the exception of how the subhead and main head are separated and how the sub head crowds the cutout. Crowding is an issue with margins and headlines on the bottom of the page.”

Division E

1st Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Valerie Katzenstein. Guacamole 10.

2nd Place: The Southern Illinoisan, Carbondale, Staff. A day to reflect. “Nice concept.”

3rd Place: Quincy Herald-Whig, Haley Stracher. Sticky sweet.

Honorable Mention: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Valerie Katzenstein. Slush Fun.

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Jessica Sedgwick. 'By the chimney with flair'. “Very pretty. This was a very fun page. Nice job of organizing a lot of content and still making the page easy to navigate not intimidating.”

2nd Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Jessica Sedgwick. 'Man's best trend'. “Nice use of branding between pages. Design is simple yet modern. Minimal use of text is appreciated.”

3rd Place: Chicago Tribune Media Group, Staff. Red reign.

Honorable Mention: Chicago Tribune Media Group, Staff. Naked truth at Playboy. “Nice to see substantial space allotted to graphics.”

CLASS 24 - NEWSPAPER DESIGN

Division A

1st Place: Berwyn Suburban Life, Staff. Berwyn Suburban Life. “Great use of photos and headlines. The paper is easy to read and looks great.”

2nd Place: Forest Park Review, Jacquinete Baldwin. Forest Park Review newspaper design . “Clean design.”

3rd Place: The Sidell Reporter, Rinda Maddox. Newspaper Design. “There is a striking difference between the January and September issues. The September issue looks fantastic.”

Honorable Mention: Pinckneyville Press, Staff. Jan. 8, 2015, June 17, 2015.

Division B

1st Place: Glen Ellyn Suburban Life, Staff. Glen Ellyn Suburban Life. “Great pictures, design and a standout sports section.”

2nd Place: The Galena Gazette, Staff. Newspaper design. “Newspaper provides its readers with a clean, easy to read design.”

3rd Place: Wednesday Journal of Oak Park & River Forest, Staff. Wednesday Journal newspaper design.

Honorable Mention: Riverside-Brookfield Landmark, Staff. Landmark newspaper design.

Division C

1st Place: Downers Grove Suburban Life, Staff. Downers Grove Suburban Life. “Downers Grove Suburban Life does what a publication in this format should do - hook you with a compelling cover photo, and keeps you hooked with good design inside. Interesting page 'header' that if done wrong would turn into a gimmick, but fits into the design of the page perfectly. Other design cues fit well. Headlines are precise and playful (when they should be).”

2nd Place: Austin Weekly News, Chicago, Staff. Austin Weekly News newspaper designs. “This was a very close category, with Austin Weekly News narrowly getting edged out of the win. Excellent ads, and cohesive layout had it leading. If the inside photo for the barbershop cover story would have been on the front, or a different photo (with faces) for Caucus agenda, this may have gone the other way.”

Division D

1st Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Staff. The Daily Chronicle. “Tough to select between the top two entries as both were equals in every way. Edge goes to Daily Chronicle as they revamped front page to cover the aftermath of a deadly tornado, while having a two-page spread of the destruction, utilizing the fact the pages are on the same web. Very good local photos in both editions submitted, and the paper has its own unique signature in category headers.”

2nd Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Staff. The Register-Mail Newspaper Design. “An excellent looking newspaper from cover to back. Beautiful local photography, cohesive design never leaves a page looking busy. Its coverage of summer storms should be noted for its depth - page after page of stories and photos of what took place.”

3rd Place: Journal Gazette & Times-Courier, Mattoon, Staff. Newspaper design.

Honorable Mention: Breeze-Courier, Taylorville, Marylee Rasar. Newspaper Design.

Division E

1st Place: Sauk Valley Media, Sterling, Staff. Sauk Valley Media.

2nd Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Mike Goebel and staff. The News-Gazette.

3rd Place: Quincy Herald-Whig, Staff. Herald-Whig newspaper design.

Honorable Mention: The Pantagraph, Bloomington, Staff. Newspaper design.

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Staff. Chicago Sun-Times design. “Exceptionally professional layout. Attention-grabbing headlines and photos.”

2nd Place: Chicago Tribune Media Group, Staff. Chicago Tribune: Jan. 8, Dec. 6. “Professional layout. Great stories. Just a notch below the Sun-Times in terms of attention-grabbing photos and headlines.”

3rd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Staff. Journal Star.

Honorable Mention: The Dispatch & The Rock Island Argus, Staff. The Rock Island Argus.

CLASS 25 - HEADLINE WRITING

Division A

1st Place: Oakland Independent, Janice Hunt. Janice Hunt headlines.

2nd Place: LeRoy Farmer City Press , Jerry Nowicki. LeRoy Farmer City Press Headlines.

3rd Place: Ford County Record, Paxton, Andrew Rosten. An unforgetta-bull trip, Shining Momenca, Nick-six, Third is the word, Medaling kids.

Honorable Mention: Winnebago Chronicle, Rockford, Lynne Conner. Coping with grief.

Division B

1st Place: Bureau County Republican, Princeton, Dave Cook. Headline writing.

2nd Place: Republic-Times, Waterloo, Corey Saathoff. Headline writing examples.

3rd Place: Bureau County Republican, Princeton, Shannon Serpette. Headline writing.

Honorable Mention: Suburban Chronicle, Geneva, Kevin Beese. A State of Chaos.

Division C

1st Place: Illinois Times, Springfield, Bruce Rushton. Law enFARCEment. “Clever word usage draws the reader in and the content delivers.”

2nd Place: Downers Grove Suburban Life, Anna Schier. Anna Schier headlines. “Good use of word choice. Draws reader’s attention.”

3rd Place: Austin Weekly News, Chicago, Michael Romain. Austin Weekly News Headlines . “Favorite headline was Harold 2.0 made me want to read the story.”

Honorable Mention: Downers Grove Suburban Life, Joe Zenkel. Joe Zenkel headlines. “Cute headlines.”

Division D

1st Place: Chicago Daily Law Bulletin, Marc Karlinsky. Daily Law Bulletin Headlines. “Witty, clever headlines give life to what otherwise might seem to be dry topics. I would pick up this publication for the headlines alone.”

2nd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Eric Olson. Headlines. “Headlines are simple and clever. They definitely draw the reader in by instantly providing accessible context.”

3rd Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Rob Buck. Rob Buck headlines. “Some people might say this headline writer is too punny, but those people would be lame. Keep rocking those plays on words.”

Division E

1st Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Mike Goebel. Fifty Shades of Gray. “Marvelous job. These headlines all seemed to perfectly fit with the stories and what each of them was about. The Star Wars headline, in particular, was brilliant.”

2nd Place: Sauk Valley Media, Sterling, Jeff Rogers. Deck the mall. “I was very impressed with the writer's ability to create catchy headlines, especially with something as dry as a gaming ordinance. Incredibly creative across the board.”

3rd Place: NewsTribune, La Salle, Ben Hohenstatt. 'lei over', 'sound and the furry', 'Russian', 'pawn' and 'The bite before Christmas'. “A lot of reporters don't put this much creativity into suggested headers — they save it for the designer. Ben's play on words with each of these is great.”

Honorable Mention: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Jami Kunzer. Kunzer. “Managed to be both creative and succinct. Great work.”

Division F

1st Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Shannon Countryman. Shannon Countryman Headlines. “Witty and funny, yet informative. Well done.”

2nd Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Don Friske. Don Friske Headlines. “Great symmetry connecting the headline and photo.”

3rd Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Neil Holdway. Neil Holdway Headlines.

Honorable Mention: Chicago Sun-Times, Jessica Sedgwick. A selection of five headlines. “Simple, yet effective.”

CLASS 26 - SPORTS SECTION

Division A

1st Place: Ford County Record, Paxton, Andrew Rosten. Sports section for September 30. “Has just about everything needed in a sports section. Good things to read for both youth and adults. Everything well written and very quality photos. Really good job.”

2nd Place: Elburn Herald, Ben Draper. Kaneland Publications - Sports Section. “A very good variety of sports subjects to chose from to read. Adult, student, youth...it is all here. Good work on the presentation too. A good read.”

3rd Place: LeRoy Farmer City Press , Staff. LeRoy Farmer City Press Sports.

Division B

1st Place: Rantoul Press, Brendan Quealy. Rantoul Press Sports Section. "Tough class to judge as all entries were well done. This one stands above the rest for the sports feature that starts it and goes right through to the completely written sports stories. Attractive to look at and a very good read."

2nd Place: Bureau County Republican, Princeton, Kevin Hieronymus. Sports section. "So close between first and second place. Very good variety of subjects and very complete. Display and photos very good too. I'll bet this section would be a good read week in and week out."

3rd Place: The Enterprise, Plainfield, Scott Taylor and Mark Gregory. Plainfield Enterprise Sports Section. "A very good sports section which contains great writing and photography. Displayed so well you want to pick it up and read. Well worth the read and well worth seeing it each week."

Honorable Mention: The Galena Gazette, Paul Gothard, Jay Dickerson. Sports section. "A variety of sports are covered in this entry. Good to read about the things that are unique to this coverage area. A worthy entry and very well displayed. All good."

Division D

1st Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Staff. Sports. "Unquestionably the best in the field. Excellent job."

2nd Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Mike Trueblood & Staff. The Register-Mail Sports Section. "A very strong sports section. Has the potential to move up to the top spot in this division."

3rd Place: Downers Grove Suburban Life, Staff. Downers Grove Suburban Life sports section. "Nice use of various elements throughout pages makes this a solid entry."

Honorable Mention: The Daily Republican, Marion, Justin Walker. The Daily Republican, Marion - Sports Section Entry. "Very good use of photos and picture placement."

Division E

1st Place: Effingham Daily News, Ryan Czachorski, Tyler Dixon. Effingham Daily News sports section. "Nice layout and wide variety of sports throughout section. Excellent."

2nd Place: Sauk Valley Media, Sterling, Sports staff. Sports Section. "Nice, clean design. Easy to read."

3rd Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Matt Daniels and staff. The News-Gazette. "A very solid sports section; a clear contender in this division."

Honorable Mention: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Staff. Northwest Herald sports.

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Sports staff. Chicago Sun-Times sports: 2 full sections. "Excellent use of color. I like the separation of each team and story getting a page of its own. Exceptional."

2nd Place: Chicago Tribune Media Group, Staff. Chicago Tribune Sports Sections. "Very detailed, splashy and well designed."

3rd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Staff. Journal Star Sports.

Honorable Mention: The Dispatch & The Rock Island Argus, Staff. Sports.

CLASS 27 - LIFESTYLE SECTION

Division B

1st Place: The Galena Gazette, Staff. Lifestyle section. "The well-written features in this section were the deciding factor in choosing the winner. Photography and layout were pleasing to the eye. Watch the tombstone headlines. Well done"

2nd Place: The Prairie Press, Paris, Staff. Best Lifestyle Section March 12 and June 4. "Nice mix local coverage and lifestyle elements."

3rd Place: Bureau County Republican, Princeton, Rita Roberts. Lifestyle. "Modular design gave it a clean, polished look."

Honorable Mention: Downers Grove Suburban Life, Staff. Planit Life. "Loved the trendy design. Keep up the good work!"

Division D

1st Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Staff. Lifestyle. "Beautiful layouts! Kudos to the page designer(s). Interesting community features and articles. Good use of modular design. Nice job!"

2nd Place: Journal Gazette & Times-Courier, Mattoon, Staff. JG-TC Lifestyle section. "Nice mix of features and community happenings. Front page layout a bit heavy on art."

3rd Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Lisa Coon. The Register-Mail Lifestyles. "Like the front page layout for the March 19 entry, very clean and modern looking."

Division E

1st Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Jami Kunzer. Play. "The cover and index are designed beautifully. The package of event previews is engaging, and the local theater columns are wonderful features."

2nd Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Staff. The News-Gazette. "The local feature anchors the section nicely. Love the March Madness-style bracket rating singers. The local theater review is a great addition, and an electronics column? Wow! Calendar is thorough, but too long."

3rd Place: The Telegraph, Alton, Jill Moon. Accent. "Local features are strong and varied. Great mix of topics covered from local angles."

Honorable Mention: The State Journal-Register, Springfield, Carla Jimenez. The Voice. "This section covers an impressively broad range of topics. Great to see so much of the content written by staff writers and correspondents."

Division F

1st Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Thomas Bruch, Sally McKee & Chris Grimm. Cue. "Great use of color and photos. Unique stories and organized layout."

2nd Place: The Dispatch & The Rock Island Argus, Staff. Time Out / QC Living. "Various and interesting stories throughout. Unique layout and great use of color and creativity in the Halloween stories."

CLASS 28 - SPECIAL SECTION

Division A

1st Place: LeRoy Farmer City Press, Jerry Nowicki, Neal Roach, Debbie Steiner. Business Finished: Vikings win Championship. "Eye-catching layout. Good coverage of the team's season. Interesting stories inside and out. Great way to honor the local team."

2nd Place: The Free Press Advocate, Wilmington, Staff. Veteran Days tab. "Touching section honoring those who serve. Enjoyed the heart-felt stories and first-person accounts. Very well done."

3rd Place: Elk Grove Journal, Staff. Elk Grove Business Journal. "Nice design, pulls the reader in. Solid coverage of local business happenings. Well done."

Honorable Mention: Cass County Star-Gazette, Beardstown, Sandy Haschemeyer. Civil War commemorative issue. "A treat for any American history buff. Would have liked to have seen a few more photos to break up the text."

Division B

1st Place: The Galena Gazette, Katie Devereaux. Train derailment. "Wow. What an incredible way to cover breaking news to the community. A story so big it requires a section. Published within days but stories seem well researched and well written; it looks as if no stone was left unturned on this story. Great job. Incredible use of photographs."

2nd Place: The Galena Gazette, Hillary Dickerson, Jay Dickerson. Peace in Union. "Beautiful history piece. Newspapers all know you can't go wrong with history; however, we often forget that even historical pieces need a modern touch when it comes to layout and design. Great layout, great use of graphics and design to tell the story of the community."

3rd Place: The Prairie Press, Paris, Staff. Eveland Gyn. "Great way to commemorate a community landmark and the people who made their mark in it. Nice mix of feature length stories and more compact bits of information. Great community keepsake piece."

Honorable Mention: Wednesday Journal of Oak Park & River Forest, Staff. Community of Caring. "Great piece. Stories are a good, manageable length. Wonderful layout; use of pull quotes and info boxes and photographs. Varied subject matter could be a real single copy sales driver. Nice job."

Division C

1st Place: Voyager Media, Plainfield, Staff. Where We Stand. "Great section. When a community suffers through a disaster like a tornado, it is never forgotten. And people can never get enough. This section does a wonderful job of recapping what happens, honoring those who suffered, and providing info for the present and future. Nice layout and use of photos."

2nd Place: Austin Weekly News, Chicago, Staff. Austin Weekly News special sections. “Wonderful piece highlighting opportunities for young people, and their accomplishments. Definitely a piece that instills community pride.”

3rd Place: Downers Grove Suburban Life, Staff. Touchdown 2015. “Nice sports piece. Great keepsake for those the in the football program and nice way for community show its support. Nice use of color.”

Division D

1st Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Staff. High school football preview. “Great layout and photos. Very nice balance and design.”

2nd Place: Paris Beacon-News, Staff. 15 Under 15. “Beautiful layout, design elements.”

3rd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Staff. IHSA championship special section. “Very nice layout. Good headlines. The ‘Get to Know’ section is a great addition.”

Honorable Mention: Pekin Daily Times, Pekin Daily Times staff. Horizons: The Police. “A very interesting look at small town police work. Quite informative.”

Division E

1st Place: The State Journal-Register, Springfield, Staff. Lincoln's funeral. “Interesting spread, great use of photos (both historic and current). Great use of info graphics to help better illustrate information for readers. Intriguing stories and great layout.”

2nd Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Matt Daniels and staff. Illini Basketball Yearbook. “Great use of color, large photographs and info graphics. Clean layout and easy for readers to follow.”

3rd Place: Rockford Register Star, Staff. Vietnam: 40 years later. “Great use of timelines, info graphics and photography. Organized and clean layout. Great editorials of the veterans.”

Honorable Mention: The Telegraph, Alton, Jill Moon, Nathan Woodside. Lincoln's funeral march. “Eye-catching photographs. Great use of historic photos/documents throughout the section.”

Division F

1st Place: The Dispatch & The Rock Island Argus, Staff. Behind The Scenes. “Clearly, a lot of work went into this original series of special sections that highlight those who make the community run. Great idea that was very well executed.”

2nd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Staff. The Illinois River. “Relevant and important reporting on a vital community resource. Nice photos. Great idea!”

3rd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Staff. Peoria's Alcohol Legacy. “Interesting glimpse into Peoria's history. Really great variety of coverage. Nice use of historical images.”

Honorable Mention: Journal Star, Peoria, Staff. Home Turf.

CLASS 29 - BEST WEBSITE

Division A

1st Place: Elburn Herald, Ben Draper. KanelandPublications.com, home of the Elburn Herald and Sugar Grove Herald. “Beautiful use of space. The site is also scalable and I really enjoy the typography and contrast of black and white separated with bold dividing lines. Photography is also used very intelligently. One problem I did notice, though, was on the front page, where some images did not populate in my browser (Chrome). If I had one criticism, it would be to remove the Kaneland Publications flag and emphasize the two communities instead.”

2nd Place: Forest Park Review, Staff. ForestParkReview.com.

3rd Place: The Hoopston Chronicle, Jordan Crook. The Hoopston Chronicle Website.

Division B

1st Place: Riverside-Brookfield Landmark, Staff. RBLandmark.com. “Navigation bar covers every conceivable category, making it easy to find news, events, and any other topic one would want. Clean design, although not a responsive design.”

2nd Place: Cook County Chronicle, Chicago, Judy Harvey, Steve Dunn. Chronicle Media Website. “Easy-to-read site that has a responsive design, which means it shrinks or grows based on screen size. Plenty of content.”

3rd Place: Republic-Times, Waterloo, Andrea Saathoff, Christine Otten. Best Website Entry.

Honorable Mention: The Journal-News, Hillsboro, Staff. Best Website.

Division C

1st Place: Downers Grove Suburban Life, Staff. MySuburbanLife.com. “In a tough competition where social media integration, and the sharing of regional news is among equals, My Suburban Life edges out the others with with a construction of a responsive site that changes depending on the size of screen or window its being viewed on. Layout is the most appealing of the group. The only negative is that it seems that whatever page you select, popup/cover ads seem to take you away from the content all the time.”

2nd Place: Voyager Media, Plainfield, Staff. Bugle Newspaper Website. “A close second, Bugle Newspapers, too has a responsive design, and is very easy to navigate. The Bugle is very nice to view with small screens/mobile devices, but the right column on the page seem to wider for content you scroll to lower, but that leaves empty space above. Really, though, a good site.”

3rd Place: Wednesday Journal Group, Oak Park, Staff. OakPark.com Powered by Wednesday Journal.

Honorable Mention: Austin Weekly News, Chicago, Staff. AustinWeeklyNews.com.

Division D

1st Place: Journal Gazette & Times-Courier, Mattoon, Staff. Best website. “The menu is really nice and user-friendly. I also like the way the e-edition allows you to see the story up close, plus see how the page is laid out. Ease of navigation, uniform in style, and there's a lot of advertising, but not overpowering. Very nice website!”

2nd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Staff. Daily Chronicle website. “Nice big picture when you open the home page, really grabs your attention. Nice and neat, uniform in style, a little busy but not overdone. Quite easy to navigate.”

3rd Place: The Journal-Standard, Freeport, Staff. journalstandard.com. “Auto refreshes after a while...that is definitely different from other websites I've been on. The updates every couple hours is good. But the whole website looks very busy and it kind of took away from me staying on that page.”

Honorable Mention: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Jay Redfern. Best website - www.galesburg.com. “Website looks quite busy and it took me away from staying on that page. Auto refreshing was different. Liked the Easter egg hunt video, and how you can just click on a story to read in the e-edition.”

Division E

1st Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Mike Howie and staff. The News-Gazette. “Loved how the narrative just sucked me in. What happens...was brilliant! The website itself was very easy to navigate, very clean. The 'Most Commented' and 'Most Viewed' was really good. Overall a really nice platform!”

2nd Place: NewsTribune, La Salle, Evan Wixom, Amy Flanery. www.newstrib.com. “The narrative explained just about all of what their website does. Was quite surprised to see the paper also has a presence on Pinterest! Twitter feeds in real time, text/email alerts, easy to navigate...an overall very nice website.”

3rd Place: Sauk Valley Media, Sterling, Angel Sierra. saukvalley.com/Sauk Valley Media. “What got my attention was the first line in the narrative (after the user/password information)...‘Our website, like our newspaper, is local, local, local.’ The pictures I saw of the 'students of the month' were awesome...really describes what their likes in just a picture! The website was very easy to click through, great job!”

Honorable Mention: Belleville News-Democrat, Staff. BND.com best website. “First thing that caught my eye when I got to the website was the 'breaking news'. Nice, big, really strong. Using email/text alerts is good for users. Twitter feeds, Instagram pics...it has it all!”

Division F

1st Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Staff. Daily Herald Website. “Clean, well-organized website that is easy on the eye. There's just enough going on here to make it an enjoyable visit and to highlight the editorial product.”

2nd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Staff. pjstar.com. “Well done, mostly clean website with plenty of headlines and attractive visual elements. Could do without the scrolling centerpiece's duplication.”

3rd Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Staff. Chicago Sun-Times online. “I'd like to see more white space here—the eye isn't always sure where to go, as there's a lot going on. Could do without the large side banner ads.”

CLASS 30 - BEST WEB PROJECT

Division B

1st Place: Wednesday Journal of Oak Park & River Forest, Marty Farmer, sports editor. The Huddle. “There is, very obviously, a massive amount of time spent on content for The Huddle. Great use of features, stats, Q and A's, photography, and contributing writers to have a central, lively hub for two prep sports teams.

2nd Place: The Hoopeston Chronicle, Dylan Robinson, Travis Holley, Jordan Crook. This Week. “Really enjoyed seeing the Chronicle find a way to get local high school students involved with their hometown newspaper.”

Division D

1st Place: Breeze-Courier, Taylorville, Breeze-Courier Staff. Top Play Tuesday. “I thought the content was interesting, however the music seemed inappropriate for a news organization.”

2nd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Staff. Fairdale tornado coverage. “This is a good showing of online content, however it was not very interactive.”

Division E

1st Place: Belleville News-Democrat, Brad Weisenstein, Zia Nizami, George Pawlaczyk, Beth Hundsdorfer. Violation of Trust: A multimedia presentation. “It was spellbinding. It shows what 'plea bargaining' really does...the wrong conviction. It took the paper investigating for this to start the 'ball rolling' on getting justice for the victims. And for the story on Jessika James, the little 4-year-old...I wept...”

2nd Place: The Herald-News, Joliet, Anna Schier. Remembering the Devastation of the 1990 Plainfield Tornado. “The pictures were very profound....the couple that was comforting each other, and I liked the meteorologists set up for the tornado memorial panel. Quite interesting how the tornado actually made Plainfield into a huge city with developers coming in and starting the growth. The web project and paper went hand-in-hand with each other!”

3rd Place: The Herald-News, Joliet, Anna Schier. Friday Night Football in Joliet. “The very first picture you see describes it all...the end of a season for a high school football team. This is a lot of information every week for the fans of football in the Joliet area. Good job!”

Honorable Mention: Quincy Herald-Whig, Staff. Adams County jail. “A great way to get people to talk about a referendum and getting answers to their questions instead of people talking amongst themselves and not getting the right information.”

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Stefano Esposito, Ashlee Rezin, Rex Chekal. 'Evi & Walter: A love story in any key'. “This was a beautiful story told to the readers, and how she is so attentive as his dementia progresses. I loved how he closed his eyes and swayed his head in time with the music...so beautiful yet so sad. The black/white pictures really set the tone to incorporate w/the earlier days. Awesome job!”

2nd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Chris Kaergard, Michael Anthony Noel, Adam Gerik. #BudgetBeard. “#BudgetBeard was priceless! To show the readers just how long the state took to try and pass a budget. Good timeline graphic, and the pictures he interjected in the timeline with the quips he used were...priceless! Great job!”

3rd Place: The Dispatch & The Rock Island Argus, Todd Mizener and Paul Colletti. The Die Hards. “Die Hards...great name for this project! There will always be 'die hard fans' no matter where you are! Really liked the way the old photos were incorporated in the video, nice!”

Honorable Mention: The Dispatch & The Rock Island Argus, Todd Mizener. These teachers rock. “Loved how the teachers motivated the kids, and they totally 'rocked' the look too!”

CLASS 31 - MOST INNOVATIVE PROJECT

Division B

1st Place: The Journal-News, Hillsboro, Staff. Our Paper, Our Say. “What a great use of space for an opinion page.”

2nd Place: Bureau County Republican, Princeton, Zita Henneberry. Dear Soldier. “This looks like a well executed campaign and is a good topic for a newspaper to be involved with.”

3rd Place: The Hoopston Chronicle, Jordan Crook. Green Screen Holiday Photos. “Great use of your technology to reach out and have some fun with community members.”

Division E

1st Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Mike Howie. Where am I? “A very cool idea that goes beyond the boundaries of traditional news media and draws in readers in a compelling way.”

2nd Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Nicole Lafond. Inside the classroom. “What a great idea, to harness the power of social media while reaching out to readers of all ages. I especially like that you used the initial idea to generate additional stories that make sense for readers while keeping it fresh.”

3rd Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Jeff D'Alessio. Inside the Census. “This project is a great example of using data in a way that isn't dull and boring. The information was packaged in a way that readers can easily consume, with information that is both entertaining and informative.”

Honorable Mention: The State Journal-Register, Springfield, Staff. 66 Things about Route 66. “This is an intriguing series that is an example of how to make something 'old' 'new again.' Beautifully packaged.”

Division F

1st Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Staff. 101 Things That Play in Peoria. “Outstanding and innovative project that highlights the things about your community that readers are most passionate about. I especially like that you included things that were not only popular spots, but curiosities with details that were likely new to many readers. Nice work.”

2nd Place: Chicago Tribune Media Group, Kori Rumore. Chicago's summer of crowds. “Phenomenal use of graphics to help illustrate what was already an interesting story. Nice work finding a unique angle to these stories and explaining facts in an ingenious way.”

3rd Place: The Dispatch & The Rock Island Argus, Staff. Hungry Hobo scoring updates and Player of the Game. “Exceptional, creative use of social media that serves both readers and advertising clients in a way that does not jeopardize ethical editorial boundaries.”

CLASS 32 – BEST PROMOTION OF PUBLIC’S RIGHT TO KNOW

Division A

1st Place: Pinckneyville Press, Brett Templeton, Jeff Egbert. E911 Coordinator Gets \$28,000 Pay Raise in Final Year. “These articles demonstrate the importance of following up on an issue, as well as the variety of information that can be garnered from public records.”

2nd Place: Ford County Record, Paxton, Will Brumleve. Board says 'no' to night meetings. “Open meetings issues aren't always about closed doors, and this article gives an even-handed approach to an issue that's alive in many small communities.”

3rd Place: Pinckneyville Press, Brett Templeton, Jeff Egbert. County Board Violates Open Meetings Act. “Tenacious reporting. Issue could easily have been left alone, and no one would be the wiser.”

Honorable Mention: Pinckneyville Press, Nate Fisher. TIF: Taxes Collected, Taxes Diverted? “Series does a good job of explaining what many readers often fail to understand.”

Division B

1st Place: Mason County Democrat, Havana, Wendy Martin. Airport Suit. “Excellent job explaining a complex issue and why it matters to taxpayers. Requiring the complainant to be a taxed entity is a new one to me. Nothing like that in Wis but don't tell them or this legislature would write a law.”

2nd Place: Republic-Times, Waterloo, Corey Saathoff. County settles with former employee. “Hooray for the newspaper follow up on records. Too often we only hear about the settlement and not the terms behind it. This article helps the reader understand the issues.”

3rd Place: The Galena Gazette, Hillary Dickerson. East Dubuque superintendent turmoil. “You told us all we needed to know except the most crucial question. Could we please have a hint as to why the Super was place on paid leave?”

Honorable Mention: Macoupin County Enquirer-Democrat, Carlinville, Staff. Open Meetings Act.

Division D

1st Place: Illinois Times, Springfield, Bruce Rushton. Rauner fights release of appointment calendar. “This is an outstanding example of how journalists can make a difference by holding officials' feet to the fire when they don't walk the talk. I especially liked that you pointed out the contrasting responses from other states. Good example of how a tip can turn into a major issue, and how watchdog journalism can impact the public.”

2nd Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Staff. School District 205. “This is what watchdog journalism is all about: holding officials accountable and ensuring transparency for citizens. An impressive effort - well done.”

Division E

1st Place: Belleville News-Democrat, Staff. Building an accurate database of Southern Illinois felony sex crime cases. “The BND's analysis and reporting on the surprising dearth of prosecutions of sex crimes

across a wide area is a sad, horrible tale that should, if there is justice in the land, lead to massive reforms by police and prosecutors. Public officials seemingly were unaware of how bad it was and pledged to make changes. What a tribute to the deft handling of large amounts of information and great writing and reporting of personal stories by your reporters and editors. Good work delving into all sides, including the difficulties of investigating and prosecuting such cases and the instances of untested rape kits.”

2nd Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Julie Wurth, Johnathan Hettinger. Campus issues. “Julie Wirth and John Hettinger wield their freedom of information requests with frequency and effectiveness as they delve into official and not so official conduct on the U of I campus. Their writing makes for easy reading of complex subjects and should be required reading for those with the power to make changes.”

3rd Place: The Southern Illinoisan, Carbondale, Staff. Making the grade? Requests show the transparency of local government. “Great job and a little chutzpah in grading local governments on their openness and ease of use by the public. It's an idea I haven't seen before, so points for originality. Would have been helped by better writing; it seems rather cobbled together. Great service in showing the public what it should expect out of local officials and governments.”

Honorable Mention: Belleville News-Democrat, Staff. Belleville News-Democrat records fight with city of Collinsville. “Great job of exposing ugliness behind the scenes of a local government with FOI requests.”

CLASS 33 - PUBLIC NOTICE JOURNALISM AWARD

Open

1st Place: The Galena Gazette, Katie Devereaux. Special Service Area hearing. “Great job of positioning the story next to the public notice ad. This called attention to the need for legal ads in communities.”

2nd Place: Pinckneyville Press, Jeff Egbert, Brett Templeton. Legal Notice Shines Light on Over \$400,000 Rural Fire Theft. “Some great reporting about expenditures by a rural department. Public notice provided key part of story.”

3rd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Adam Poulisse. Zombie Apocalypse Super PAC. “An interesting and amazing story that originated in part from a public notice ad.”

CLASS 34 - BEST SCHOOL BOARD COVERAGE

Division A

1st Place: Ford County Record, Paxton, Will Brumleve. PBL School Board (Eastlawn's fate). “Good series on important board, financial, and community issue. Excellent board work coverage of both board’s community outreach and the reasons for the potential referenda. Covered each question with depth. Well-written, detailed but clear. Valuable reporting for all parties. Also good board meeting reporting.”

2nd Place: Coal City Courant, Ann Gill. Unit 1 school board coverage. “Good school board coverage across topics. Excellent work bringing long-term, complicated issue to the readership. Excellent

explainers on special ed and transportation budget. Very good understanding of board work and meeting reportage in stadium story, emphasizing need vs. want.”

3rd Place: Scott County Times, Winchester, Justin A. Cobb. School boards of Scott County. “Good, clear coverage of a range of issues, appreciated the use of sidebars for clarity. Fair reporting of board expectations in difficult situation. Stories present issues important to district community.”

Honorable Mention: Ford County Record, Paxton, Will Brumleve. GCMS school board (One Earth Energy). “GCMS story fits better with this entry. Good coverage of a complicated and costly tax issue. Accessible, well researched and presented.”

Division B

1st Place: The Galena Gazette, Hillary Dickerson. Galena School Board coverage. “The clear standout. Excellent enterprise reporting on different sides of key referendum issues. Clear and informational. Excellent explanations; readers would gain an understanding of the work of a school board and its relationship to its community.”

2nd Place: The Niles Bugle, Igor Studenkov. Niles area school districts. “Good series of topics, well-written and interesting. Crisp writing. School security story was particularly well-done and informative. Great job of meeting contest's board/community criteria, clarity and depth.”

3rd Place: The Prairie Press, Paris, Gary Henry, Nancy Zeman. Chrisman School Board and its basketball coach. “Demonstrated strong understanding of a boards’ role in school governance, and an assessment of a difficult personnel situation.”

Honorable Mention: The Galena Gazette, Hillary Dickerson. East Dubuque School coverage. “Good work in tackling a tough subject that included personnel issues, OMA laws and community objections to board decisions. Community reaction story and photos particularly well done.”

Division E

1st Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Allison Goodrich, Caitlin Swieca, Hannah Prokop. McHenry Teachers Strike. “McHenry District 156 Strike: Clear, even-handed, detail-filled reporting of a strike situation. Offered pertinent new details and observations from many perspectives. Nice handling of print deadlines. Shared comments from both sides of the negotiations throughout the coverage. Earns top honors for criteria of school board governance and relation to community, as well as enterprise, depth and clarity.”

2nd Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Emily K. Coleman. Bleacher battle. “District 155 Bleachers: Extensive, clear, direct coverage from the many angles of a complicated situation. Excellent explainer pieces, especially those regarding the financial cost and the advance piece for a community meeting. Good work relating the district’s troubled relationship with its community over this issue. Top three in this category were very close.”

3rd Place: The State Journal-Register, Springfield, Jason Nevel. Springfield School Board coverage. “The minority hiring piece stands out in this entire contest: Well researched, sourced, and written. A great read on an important topic. Entry meets award criteria excellently, covering a wide range of education issues and board input and decisions with clarity and enterprise. Top three in this category were all excellent.”

Honorable Mention: Journal Star, Peoria, Pam Adams. Pam Adams School Board Coverage. “Good coverage of stories impacting school and community. ‘Peace Circles’ was a particularly good read. Obtaining the principal perspective was excellent reporting of a budget situation. Judging criteria regarding governance and policy not met as well as other entries.”

CLASS 35 - BEST COVERAGE OF TAXATION

Division A

1st Place: Pinckneyville Press, Jeff Egbert, Brett Templeton. E911 Coordinator Gets \$28,000 Pay Raise in Final Year. “Wow. Great digging by the paper to expose some shenanigans. Hits all of the requirements.”

2nd Place: Pinckneyville Press, Nate Fisher. TIF: Taxes Collected, Taxes Diverted?

3rd Place: Ford County Record, Paxton, Will Brumleve. Bills in tax appeal total nearly \$1M.

Honorable Mention: Pinckneyville Press, Jeff Egbert, Brett Templeton. Woman Steals Over \$400,000 from Rural Fire Protection District. “Good reporting, though too much rehashing of previously printed story.”

Division B

1st Place: The Galena Gazette, Hillary Dickerson. Galena school referendum.

2nd Place: Mason County Democrat, Havana, Wendy Martin. Coverage of Taxation.

3rd Place: Bureau County Republican, Princeton, Goldie Rapp, Shannon Serpette, Dave Cook. Throwing 911 a lifeline.

Honorable Mention: The Galena Gazette, Katie Devereaux, Hillary Dickerson. Special Service Area hearing.

Division E

1st Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Staff. Property Taxes: Follow the Money. “This report was very thorough and interesting. It explained something that is a common but that the majority of people don't actually understand.”

2nd Place: The Southern Illinoisan, Carbondale, Dustin Duncan, Rhonda May. Taxes: Paying more than your neighbor? “This was easily digestible and created a one stop resource for readers. I think they appreciate not having to work too hard to get the numbers they want.”

3rd Place: Rockford Register Star, Kevin Haas. Property tax coverage by Kevin Haas. “I liked the way this broke down assessment appeals. It took an interesting look at taxes and provided a fresh look for readers.”

Honorable Mention: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Emily K. Coleman. McHenry County TIF districts used for Three Oaks Recreation Area, road improvements. “Politicians love to throw words like “TIF” around. This story did a great job of breaking down what a TIF district is and what it means for a community.”

Division F

1st Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Jake Griffin. Tax Watchdog. "It is truly impressive what results are produced from the reporter's open records requests. He took something that could be boring and made it very interesting."

2nd Place: Chicago Tribune Media Group, Staff. Visualizing the tax impact of Illinois financial crisis. "This was a really cool and unique way to explain taxes to people without boring them. Breaking things down by common everyday purchases engages the reader."

CLASS 36 - BEST INVESTIGATIVE/ENTERPRISE REPORTING

Division A

1st Place: Ford County Record, Paxton, Will Brumleve. Bills in tax appeal total nearly \$1M. "A great use of FOIA to expose legal bills for the public in a property tax dispute."

2nd Place: Pinckneyville Press, Nathan Fisher. TIF: Taxes Collected, Taxes Diverted?. "A thorough examination of a municipal tax incentive program common in the state but not examined enough."

3rd Place: Pinckneyville Press, Brett Templeton, Jeff Egbert. Three Years Later: Leitzen Keeps Teaching Certificate, Author of Note Still in Question. "Good follow up on a story using FOIA to dig into why a teacher kept his teaching certificate after controversial resignation."

Honorable Mention: Ford County Record, Paxton, Will Brumleve. Where's your placard? "A nice quick investigation to see if a public health program is being carried out effectively."

Division B

1st Place: The Galena Gazette, Katie Devereaux. Cunningham. "A good example of the need to fight FOIA battles to release documents on actions public agencies take on personnel issues."

2nd Place: The Galena Gazette, Hillary Dickerson. East Dubuque school turmoil.

3rd Place: Mason County Democrat, Havana, Wendy Martin. Airport Suit.

Honorable Mention: Mason County Democrat, Havana, Wendy Martin. Fear of Freeze.

Division C

1st Place: Illinois Times, Springfield, Bruce Rushton. Horrific health care. "A much needed story on the poor health care for prisoners in Illinois that provided deep documentation that outlined the severity of the problem."

Division D

1st Place: Journal Gazette & Times-Courier, Mattoon, Staff. JG-TC college enrollment series. "An enterprising and thorough series of stories into college enrollment and its impact."

2nd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Brittany Keeperman and Brett Rowland. Council member reports bribe attempt.

3rd Place: McDonough County Voice, Macomb, Michelle Langhout. Blood Donation: How blood banks meet crucial medical needs.

Honorable Mention: McDonough County Voice, Macomb, Jacqueline Covey. Bridging The Testing Gap: State data for Macomb shows divide between group test scores.

Division E

1st Place: Belleville News-Democrat, Beth Hundsdorfer and George Pawlaczyk. Violation of Trust. "A superb investigation into the lack of prosecution of those committing sex crimes. Incredibly documented through prodigious reporting."

2nd Place: The Southern Illinoisan, Carbondale, Molly Parker. Chaos in Cairo. "This shows the power of a continuing investigation into the shame of a housing authorities operations."

3rd Place: The Times, Ottawa, David Giuliani. Drug forfeitures. "A strong probe into how a drug forfeiture program is run and who benefits. An investigation that should be replicated across the state."

Honorable Mention: Belleville News-Democrat, George Pawlaczyk and Beth Hundsdorfer. Finances of state Parole Board members. "A fine investigation into misdoings into the finances and questionable appointments of the Parole Board."

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Tribune Media Group, Jodi S. Cohen, Stacy St. Clair. College of DuPage investigation. "A classic investigation into corruption in higher education. Well-documented, relentless and effective."

2nd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Leslie Renken. Hog Farm Causes Division. "A thorough enterprising look at a proposed hog farm and the problems it can create."

3rd Place: The Dispatch & The Rock Island Argus, Stephen Elliott. Prisons bursting at seams / Prison system in crisis / Laws have to change / Ex inmates describe life. "An exemplary enterprising series that uncovers the overcrowding and extensive other problems within the Illinois prison system."

Honorable Mention: The Dispatch & The Rock Island Argus, Stephen Elliott. Deadly Force -- and sidebars. "The kind of in-depth look at shooting by police and reasons behind those shootings and questions they raise."

CLASS 37 - Generations Serving Generations VOLUNTEER AWARD

Division B

1st Place: Bureau County Republican, Princeton, BCR staff. Hometown Heroes. "Great feature showing a number of people of different ages and backgrounds that volunteer."

2nd Place: Effingham & Teutopolis News Report, Steve Raymond. Joergens has heart of a servant. "Good article about Mrs. Joergens. The section of the article about her daughter getting her to the banquet was well placed and a great bit of 'inside info.'"

3rd Place: Lake County Journal, Grayslake, Angela Sykora . Alzheimer's care volunteer. “Nice feature on an inspiring lady.”

Honorable Mention: Wheaton Suburban Life, Nathan Lurz. Biennial homeless count. “Well done press release of a large problem in many communities.”

Division E

1st Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Phil Luciano. Dream Center Peoria. “Great use of first-person to tell the story. Engaging use of descriptive words that compel the reader to want to learn more.”

2nd Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Julie Wurth. Cunningham Children's Home. “Everyone loves a story about someone who was helped and then returns to give back. Good storytelling.”

3rd Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Noelle McGee. Puppy Love. “Who doesn't love a story about animals and the joy they can bring?”

Honorable Mention: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Tim Mitchell. Spotlight on Service. “This series used an effective block format to convey a lot of information about a lot of service clubs. Good way to share their message.”

2015 Sweepstakes Winners

David B. Kramer Memorial Trophy –
LeRoy Farmer City Press

2nd Place: Forest Park Review

3rd Place: Ford County Record, Paxton

4th Place: Elburn Herald

Harold and Eva White Memorial Trophy -
The Galena Gazette

2nd Place: Bureau County Republican, Princeton

3rd Place: Republic-Times, Waterloo

4th Place: Wednesday Journal of Oak Park & River Forest

Will Loomis Memorial Trophy -

Downers Grove Suburban Life

2nd Place: Austin Weekly News, Chicago

3rd Place: Illinois Times, Springfield

4th Place: Jersey County Journal, Jerseyville

Patrick Coburn Award of Excellence -

Daily Chronicle, DeKalb

2nd Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg
3rd Place: Journal Gazette & Times-Courier, Mattoon
4th Place: Pekin Daily Times

Mabel S. Shaw Memorial Trophy -
The News-Gazette, Champaign
2nd Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake
3rd Place: Sauk Valley Media, Sterling
4th Place: Belleville News-Democrat

Stuart R. Paddock Memorial Trophy -
Chicago Sun-Times
2nd Place: Journal Star, Peoria
3rd Place: Chicago Tribune Media Group
4th Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights