

**BTW without Ramey is just a building  
she was the beating heart**



Former assistant principal speaks out a year after she was fired from her job at the school, but she says she was the beating heart of the building.

**Bluff City Minerals faces lawsuit amid sinkhole spotlight**

John Corbin's death. Examining safety protocols, legal battles at Bluff City Minerals.

**SEARCH OF MORE**



Abraham hired as administrator

There's a deep hole with a strange odor at the Neil Street Plaza excavation site in Champaign. Possibly an old well? If so, it could be a problem.

There's a deep hole with a strange odor at the Neil Street Plaza excavation site in Champaign. Possibly an old well? If so, it could be a problem.



**Chicago Tribune**

**Classifications, missed millions**

Illinois trees and plants suffering from 'chemical trespassing'



**'Chemical trespassing'**

Illinois trees and plants suffering from 'chemical trespassing'



**Best of the Press 2025**

ILLINOIS PRESS ASSOCIATION

**COMMUNITY NEWS**

Secret Service director resigns after assassination attempt on Trump

**Abraham hired as administrator**



Paul Abraham hired as administrator

**Supplies**

**Local Civics**

**Forest Park**

**Review**

**News**

**Alldi opens**

Alldi opens in Forest Park

## GENERAL EXCELLENCE

### Division A

**1st Place: El Paso Journal**

**2nd Place: Forest Park Review**

### Division B

**1st Place: The Regional News, Palos Heights.** “While this was a tough category to judge because there were so many deserving entries, The Regional News stood out for its excellent community coverage – through a plethora of stories, photo stories of events and sports – as well as its clean layout and local advertising designs.”

**2nd Place: The Mendota Reporter.** “This was such a close category to judge, especially between these top three winners. The Mendota Reporter is a great example of a well-rounded community newspaper.”

**3rd Place: Community News Brief, Macomb.** “This was such a close category to judge, especially between these top three winners. Community News Brief is a great example of a well-rounded community newspaper.”

**4th Place: Greater Southwest News-Herald, Chicago.** “This entry stood out for its mix of local and regional news coverage as well as clean layout design.”

### Division C

**1st Place: Ford County Chronicle, Paxton.** “Packs a punch. Great blend of government, sports, crime, features, photography, and the local community. Staff puts in a lot of work and it shows.”

**2nd Place: Des Plaines Journal**

**3rd Place: Wednesday Journal of Oak Park & River Forest**

### Division D

**1st Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb.** “Entertaining local coverage and eye-grabbing layout”

**2nd Place: Herald-Whig, Quincy**

**3rd Place: Herald & Review, Decatur**

**4th Place: Chicago Daily Law Bulletin**

### Division E

**1st Place: Belleville News-Democrat,** “A beautiful looking paper with strong sense of design and a layout that gives images and articles room to breathe.”

**2nd Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign.** “Good coverage of vital local issues and opportunities to take the local temperature and give readers a voice, such as the Town Hall section, were very enjoyable. Layout is sometimes a touch crowded. Some highly pixelated images should have been made smaller to improve clarity.”

**3rd Place: The Pantagraph, Bloomington.** “A good paper with coverage of important issues, such as domestic violence and the death of Sonya Massey.”

**4th Place: The Dispatch, The Rock Island Argus, Moline.** “A good looking newspaper.”

### Division F

**1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times.** “The

Chicago Sun-Times had an extensive amount of coverage with little reliance on articles from the Associated Press. Its guide to the 2024 DNC also offered a spotlight on the city of Chicago that highlighted food, culture, and how residents can navigate and attend the event.”

**2nd Place: Daily Herald Media Group**

## COMMUNITY SERVICE

### Division C

**1st Place: Kane County Chronicle, Geneva, David Petesch.** Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners there to support, treat patients in traumatic times: “Well-written, showed compassion, and brought out facts. First time I have seen this subject actually covered, so well done.”

**2nd Place: The Hinsdalean, Staff.** Historic preservation

**3rd Place: The County Chronicle, Tuscola, David Porter, Mike Carroll & Bill Englehardt.** Remembering Tuscola

### Division D

**1st Place: The Telegraph, Alton, Erik Hall & Jill Moon.** Transparency, Leadership, and Accountability in Bethalto Schools: “The investigation into the Bethalto School System officials’ theatrics provided unique insight into the leadership’s actions, specifically the superintendent’s lackluster leadership and lack of transparency throughout the mess of internal affairs. This series showed a high level of journalistic integrity while prioritizing government accountability. Great work.”

**2nd Place: Journal-Courier, Jacksonville, Staff.** Varies. All under “Connecting community”: “The resources and facts provided in the three pieces are beneficial not only for garnering further donations to the community programs but also for serving those in need.”

**3rd Place: The Edwardsville Intelligencer, Jason Koch.** Intelligencer forms Reader Advisory Team

### Division E

**1st Place: Belleville News-Democrat, Lexi Cortes.** Is your St. Clair County Board member coming to work? Here are their attendance records: “This is actually such a great idea. I have often wondered if people who don’t attend meetings regularly know how often the person they continue to vote for doesn’t attend the meeting or even offer an input. I have never seen anything compiled like this and just really applaud the ability to ask the tough questions.”

**2nd Place: Belleville News-Democrat, Teri Maddox.** Community faces challenge of deteriorating homes, squatters: “Really great job on the reporting and reminding the community of what is happening. I was shocked to see 100 homes being demolished. I lived in a similar community, and the community actually applied for Home Town Takeover, so I know what you’re

dealing with. Keep up the great work. Sometimes all it takes is one local person to make the investment and rehab a building or home for others to jump on board.”

**3rd Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Kathy Reiser.** Kathy’s Mailbag

### Division F

**1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Sun-Times & WBEZ Staff.** Chicago’s first elected school board coverage:

“Helping citizens prepare for elections is the ultimate in community service. The voter guide, graphics and other materials in this series are impressive in their scope and the depth of information provided. The voters guide covered elections at all levels in one supplement that also provided information on how to register to vote, find one’s polling place, etc. This is what community service is all about. Well done!”

**2nd Place: Chicago Tribune, Staff.** Culture of Corruption: “I grew up reading about corruption in Chicago, but this series lays out so very clearly exactly what’s gone on by whom, and in some cases, why. It’s a brilliant series, and had it been entered in an in-depth or investigative reporting category, I would have chosen it for first place, hands down. That’s not to say that uncovering corruption is not community service. It is. However, this series seemed not to reveal corruption so much as provide a meta analysis of it with a bit of historical review thrown in. It’s brilliant reporting and quite an achievement, however.”

## LOCAL EDITORIAL

### Division B

**1st Place: The Woodstock Independent, Eileen Millard.** Handling Hate Speech at a Public Meeting: “Excellent viewpoint presented carefully.”

**2nd Place: Cass County Star-Gazette, Beardstown, Sally Lael.** Our hearts ache

**3rd Place: Cass County Star-Gazette, Beardstown, Sally Lael.** Let’s take care of our youth

**4th Place: Cass County Star-Gazette, Beardstown, Sally Lael.** We care about our Cass communities

### Division C

**1st Place: Wednesday Journal of Oak Park & River Forest, Dan Haley.**

Rep-arations owed: “A clear, interestingly written, effectively organized editorial about a substantive and timely topic – what more could you ask for?”

**2nd Place: The Galena Gazette, Staff.** A Great Community Deserves a Great School: “This editorial makes a strong, easy-to-follow case for an important community need.”

**3rd Place: The Hinsdalean, Pamela Lannom.** Here’s hoping for better weather in D86: “A good ‘carrot-and-stick’ editorial, with the carrot being optimism about the new school superintendent and the stick being a pointed reminder about recent issues with the school board.”

**4th Place: The Hinsdalean, Pamela**

Lannom. Board members’ taco dinner gives us indigestion: “It’s good to periodically remind readers (and officials) about the importance of transparency – as well as, one might add, of the appearance of transparency.”

### Division D

**1st Place: The Sentinel, Mt. Vernon, Todd Marver.** Nashville Council should do more to inform public: “In light of recent events in our country, this editorial spoke to me on a visceral level. Without local newspapers continuing to hold our local government accountable and calling them out publicly when they fail to do so, our democracy will suffer. Thank you for standing up for your community.”

**2nd Place: The Sentinel, Mt. Vernon, Jeff Peyton.** Local paper’s responsibility in aftermath of Trump assassination attempt: “Very well said. Nobody covers your community like you do. Let the national media do its thing and then y’all can show your readers how it hits locally.”

**3rd Place: Herald-Whig, Quincy, Matt Hopf.** Remember why we have a three-day weekend

### Division E

**1st Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Jim Dey.** Champaign school district: “A troublesome situation excellently chronicled. Way to stand up for students caught in the crossfire.”

**2nd Place: The Dispatch · The Rock Island Argus, Moline, Tom Martin.** Issues of transparency with city of Davenport

**3rd Place: The Dispatch · The Rock Island Argus, Moline, Tom Martin.** With dog shooting incident, we can all do better

**4th Place: The Dispatch · The Rock Island Argus, Moline, Tom Martin.** Quad-City Times Bix 7 has become the spirit of Quad-Cities

### Division F

**1st Place: Daily Herald Media Group, Jim Slusher.** Holding the DuPage County Clerk Accountable: “Displays a thorough knowledge of city and county government and makes a compelling argument that upholds journalistic integrity.”

**2nd Place: Daily Herald Media Group, Lisa Miner.** Dangerous Games

**3rd Place: Daily Herald Media Group, Robert Sanchez.** Protecting the Future

## NEWS REPORTING - SINGLE STORY

### Division A

**1st Place: DuPage County Chronicle, Wheaton, Kevin Beese.** Sentencing in fatal Wheaton accident leaves victim’s family unsatisfied: “This story was gripping. You captured all of the mother’s emotions, but still managed to explain the side of the defense. My heart goes out to the mother and what she must be feeling. I thank you for following this story all the way to the courts.”

**2nd Place: Rockton-Roscoe News,**



**PHOTO SERIES** Division A  
1st Place: El Paso Journal, Rita Drake



**PHOTO SERIES** Division B  
1st Place: Beecher City Journal, P.J. Ryan



**PHOTO SERIES** Division C  
1st Place: The County Chronicle, Tuscola, Staff



**PHOTO SERIES** Division E  
1st Place: Belleville News-Democrat, Joshua Carter



**SPOT NEWS PHOTO**  
Division A  
1st Place: El Paso Journal, Cara Howard

Alycia Dioneda Schneeder. Book fair controversy at Prairie Hill sparks community debate over book selection  
**3rd Place:** Forest Park Review, Jessica Mordacq. Jackson Boulevard water reservoir project poses problems for Forest Park

#### Division B

**1st Place: The Commercial-News,** Danville, Kaighla White. Houses, houses everywhere but nowhere to live: “A great journalistic exploration between the cause and effect of housing policy and homelessness.”

**2nd Place: The Mendota Reporter,** Brandon LaChance. Progress is being made to improve downtown Mendota: “A well-written and expansive news feature that highlights the reality of the circumstances while offering hope for recovery.”

**3rd Place: The Commercial-News,** Danville, Amy Graham-McCarty. ‘We love you, we hate what you done’: “While sentencing stories are common, the skill with which this was written elevates it to another level. Well done.”

**4th Place: Kendall County Record,** Yorkville, Joey Weslo. Haunted by waters: Yorkville record-setter debuts Mississippi River canoe documentary: “A well-written and enjoyable read.”

#### Division C

**1st Place: Ford County Chronicle,** Paxton, Will Brumleve. Denial of permit recommended WITH SIDEBARS: “The remarkable set of stories about a proposed carbon dioxide pipeline that Ford County Chronicle publisher and news editor Will Brumleve reported on and wrote about is what community journalism is all about.

A local issue that would impact the Ford County community, and possibly in dangerous ways, was brought to the Chronicle’s readers in four in-depth and insightful stories that comprised the entire front page and several pages of the inside of the March 6, 2024 edition.

Clearly, CO2 pipeline transportation is a big issue in Ford County and across Illinois. From the lead story about a state agency engineer recommending the denial of an area company’s application to build the CO2 pipeline for safety and viability concerns, to the story about the environmental concerns of how such a pipeline would affect the soil and water, to the story about how first responders and area facilities explain that they are not in any way prepared to handle a pipeline leak, to, finally, the story about the state considering legislation to place a moratorium on such pipelines until proper environmental and safety precautions are in place, Brumleve gives readers a crash course in every aspect of the pipeline issue.

A truly impressive effort that performed a great service to the residents of Ford County and the readers of the Chronicle.”

**2nd Place: Naperville Sun,** Tess Kenny. Debunking councilman’s viral

claims about migrant housing: “Great job in bringing attention to the Naperville community’s migrant housing issue and holding a councilman accountable for his public words.”

**3rd Place: Illinois Times,** Springfield, Dean Olsen. Finding a way forward: “A thorough look at a community’s efforts to best deal with a tragedy on many levels. The reporter does a great job of highlighting the pain, confusion and anger caused by Sonya Massey’s killing.”

**4th Place: Illinois Times,** Springfield, Scott Reeder. When kids can’t read: “Excellent reporting and explanation of why Springfield’s School District 186 is abandoning a long-entrenched program that was failing to teach enough low-income and minority children to read at a proficient level.”

#### Division D

**1st Place: Journal-Courier,** Jacksonville, Ben Singson. Questions & heartache: “This is a powerful story with an incredibly strong lede that puts you right in the center of this family’s grief. The reporter does a wonderful job of making a crime story more than just a crime story by telling it through the eyes of family members but also communicating the important details, including the most important piece that the alleged shooter is still free. A job very well done.”

**2nd Place: The Herald-News,** Joliet, Felix Sarver. Illinois AG report: Joliet Police Department fails to hold bad officers accountable: “This is a strong story with wonderful reporting and writing. The subject is disturbing and shedding a light on this topic is critically important and one of our key responsibilities as journalists.”

**3rd Place: Journal-Courier,** Jacksonville, David C.L. Bauer. Spider-Man statue has city, shop in standoff: “This was an outstanding story and while it wasn’t as serious as some of the others in this field ... this reporter definitely deserved recognition for a job well done.”

**4th Place: Herald & Review,** Decatur, Tony Reid. Powers Mansion open house: “This was a really well-written story with a strong lede and good use of personification and colorful description to bring this house to life. I enjoyed it.”

#### Division E

**1st Place: The Pantagraph,** Bloomington, Kaitlyn Klepec. Domestic violence survivors share stories: “Well written, engaging, good use of sources”

**2nd Place: Belleville News-Democrat,** Lexi Cortes. Metro-east mobile home parks bought by outside investment firm leave tenants ‘suffering’: “Engaging, well researched, good use of sources.”

**3rd Place: The News-Gazette,** Champaign, Joey Wright. ‘I think of her as someone that fought’: “Touching, emotional, thought provoking.”

**4th Place: The Dispatch • The Rock Island Argus,** Moline, Tom Loewy,

Thomas Geyer & Anthony Watt. Meth spreading like ‘wildfire’: “Good writing. Well researched. Good sources.”

#### Division F

**1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times,** Staff. “The invisible toll of opioid overdoses on a generation of Black men in America”: “Statistics and numbers were used to make the story have more credibility. The statistics and the stories of the men in the story were compelling and heartfelt. This piece was also very timely and explored a different side of the opioid crisis that is not often discussed. Research was thorough.”

**2nd Place: Chicago Sun-Times,** Stephanie Zimmermann & Elvia Malagón. “Apartment ‘junk’ fees sock it to renters”

**3rd Place: Chicago Tribune,** Jeremy Gorner. Loss of downstate prison latest blow

**4th Place: Daily Herald Media Group,** Charles Keeshan & Susan Sarkauskas. Senior Follies

### NEWS REPORTING - SERIES

#### Division A

**1st Place: Rockton-Roscoe News,** Michael McGinnis. Carjacking in South Beloit led to the fatal police shooting of the suspect after he fled police: “Excellent follow-up to a dramatic event. These stories were made especially difficult, I’m sure, by the fact they involved not only two different police jurisdictions but two different states.”

**2nd Place: Forest Park Review,** Jessica Mordacq. Forest Park zoning code: “Good explanation of the zoning code controversies with quotes from all sides.”

**3rd Place: El Paso Journal,** Rita Drake. El Paso Golf Club Centennial series: “I really liked the planning that went into this project.”

**4th Place: Winnebago Chronicle,** Rockford, Lynne Conner. Solar farm opposition: “Good use of quotes to show the opposing sides.”

#### Division B

**1st Place: Glenview Journal,** Tom Robb. Planned Navy Burn Pit Landfill Remeedation Concerns Residents: “Tough subject, fairly covered. Multiple viewpoints represented.”

**2nd Place: Riverside-Brookfield Landmark,** Trent Brown. Tax levy referendum series

**3rd Place: Community News Brief,** Macomb, Darcie Shinberger & Lynne Campbell. Coverage of Ousted Hospital CEO

**4th Place: Community News Brief,** Macomb, Darcie Shinberger. Bullying Awareness Month three-part series

#### Division C

**1st Place: Ford County Chronicle,** Paxton, Will Brumleve. Denial of permit, capturing attention, and a lot on the line recommended WITH SIDEBARS: “The series covered every angle of a complex issue, and no stone seemed unturned. The research and

reporting was very thorough, and residents and readers were able to get a clear picture of a topic with many offshoots and areas of impact.”

**2nd Place: Wednesday Journal of Oak Park & River Forest,** Luzane Draughon. Homelessness in Oak Park: “Comprehensive researching and reporting on a prevalent societal issue that is under-reported. Many communities are going through similar problems, and this series shines a much-needed bright light.”

**3rd Place: The Hinsdalean,** Ken Knutson & Pamela Lannom. Richards family deals with son’s death

**4th Place: Illinois Times,** Springfield, Sam Stecklow, Farrah Anderson & Dean Olsen. Sheriff defends hiring process

#### Division D

**1st Place: Herald-Whig,** Quincy, Daniel Bethers. Housing coverage: “Great ongoing coverage of local housing issues. High local interest, significance of subject matter and thoroughness of reporting. Clearly presented information and in-depth story-telling. Good supplementary photographs. Effective use of quotes and concise headlines.”

**2nd Place: Sauk Valley Media,** Charlene Bielema. Coleman trial: “Great series coverage with high local interest and thorough reporting including a variety of perspectives. Clearly presented information and in-depth story-telling.”

**3rd Place: Sauk Valley Media,** Brandon Clark. Homelessness series: “Good ongoing coverage of homelessness concerns in an area. High local interest, significance of subject matter and thoroughness of reporting. Clearly presented information.”

**4th Place: Sauk Valley Media,** Charlene Bielema. Pizza Ranch shooting: “Good continued coverage of high local interest in a relatively timely manner. Clearly presented information.”

#### Division E

**1st Place: The Dispatch • The Rock Island Argus,** Moline, Tom Loewy, Thomas Geyer & Anthony Watt. Double homicide in Davenport: “Very thorough investigative piece. I applaud the reporter on this for sticking with it and spending so much time on this complicated story. Your work speaks for itself, and your attention to detail was superb.”

**2nd Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign,** Jana Wiersema. A half-century later, truth comes out: Deceased doctor accused of fertility fraud: “Well done!”

**3rd Place: The News-Gazette,** Champaign, Jeff D’Alessio, Samuel Lisec & Jim Rossow. The murder of Brandon Hardway

**4th Place: The News-Gazette,** Champaign, Jeff D’Alessio. Champaign school district, community at odds over removal of popular admin.



**SPOT NEWS PHOTO** Division E 1st Place: *The Dispatch • The Rock Island Argus*, Moline, Katelyn Metzger



**SPOT NEWS PHOTO** Division B  
1st Place: *The Commercial-News*, Danville, Amy Graham-McCarty



**SPOT NEWS PHOTO** Division C  
1st Place: *The Prairie Press*, Paris, Bethany Wagoner



**SPOT NEWS PHOTO** Division D  
1st Place: *The Telegraph*, Alton, John Badman



**SPOT NEWS PHOTO** Division F  
1st Place: *Daily Herald Media Group*, Paul Valade

## Division F

**1st Place: Chicago Tribune**, Lisa Schencker & Emily Hoerner. Medical Misconduct: “Captivating and impressive storytelling on a complex and dark topic that deserves the attention and respect it is given here.”

**2nd Place: Chicago Sun-Times**, Robert Herguth. “Clergy sexual abuse of children covered up”

**3rd Place: Chicago Tribune**, Staff. Culture of Corruption

**4th Place: Chicago Sun-Times**, Elvia Malagón, Brett Chase & Lauren Fitz-Patrick. “Hiding the homeless amid DNC’s national spotlight”

## LOCALIZED NATIONAL STORY

### Division A

**1st Place: Forest Park Review**, Jessica Mordacq. Forest Park has turned a bit bluer since 2016

### Division B

**1st Place: The Commercial-News**, Danville, Amy Graham-McCarty. Beryl won’t rain on Hoopston friends’ vacation: “Very interesting take on a national story. Good light-hearted take on a potential devastating natural disaster. Well thought out. I liked the candid-style interviews, although the characters in the story were a little unlikeable. They came across insensitive to those that were less fortunate in this storm.”

**2nd Place: Rochelle News-Leader**, Jeff Helfrich. Heart Month: RCH’s Slattengren recuperates from triple bypass surgery at cardiac rehab unit: “Well-rounded story, likable interview with a meaningful call to action for readers. Good job!”

**3rd Place: Rochelle News-Leader**, Jeff Helfrich. Cancer Control Month at RCH: RN Williams helps patients with infusions after fight of her own: “Great story!”

**4th Place: The Mendota Reporter**, Brandon LaChance. Should phones be banned from Mendota schools?: “Great job localizing a national topic. Well thought out story with good interviews and quotes. There wasn’t a groundbreaking resolution, not sure there was much of a story here.”

### Division C

**1st Place: The Journal-News**, Hillsboro, Isaiah Atkins. Local Mothers Fly Supplies To North Carolina: “I found the content of this piece moving enough that I teared up a little while reading. It’s the type of story that is illustrative of a community’s character.”

**2nd Place: Illinois Times**, Springfield, Dean Olsen. Not present at crime, still charged with murder

**3rd Place: Austin Weekly News**, Chicago, Jessica Mordacq. With declining enrollment, can American Legions, VFWs stay relevant today?

**4th Place: Naperville Sun**, Tess Kenney. Naperville teens at the DNC

### Division D

**1st Place: Daily Chronicle**, DeKalb, Kelsey Rettke & Brenda Schory.

Why are migrants coming to northern Illinois? Here’s what we know: “This is extremely well done. It’s a thorough look at how thousands of asylum-seekers are making their way through to Chicago by way of satellite cities, in a way that someone who is not directly affected by the migrant influx can easily understand. It takes the national issue of immigration out of the political sphere and humanizes it for those who live in the towns where officials are struggling to find balance between their residents and the human beings who need to be treated like human beings, even when their presence may be a strain on local resources. This is excellent work!”

**2nd Place: The Telegraph**, Alton, Scott Cousins. Alton business owner tied to 3-D gun printing, nephew of State Rep. Amy Elik

**3rd Place: Daily Chronicle**, DeKalb, Camden Lazenby. School threats trending in Illinois. How are authorities responding?

### Division E

**1st Place: The Pantagraph**, Bloomington, Mateusz Janik. Peace & Piety: Muslim community celebrates Ramadan: “Really enjoyed the different interviews and perspectives in the article. Also, the statistics and facts added to the credibility of the story. The story was not divisive, but showed more of how we all can come together.”

**2nd Place: Northwest Herald**, Crystal Lake, Janelle Walker. Local people who met President Jimmy Carter reflect on him and his legacy

**3rd Place: Belleville News-Democrat**, Todd Eschman. The violent act that ties the Belleville area to the Pennsylvania home of Trump’s shooter

**4th Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Jeff D’Alessio. Faculty brace for impact

### Division F

**1st Place: Chicago Tribune**, Karina Atkins. Illinois’ nuclear plants and AI: “Smoothly written. In-depth, yet brings close to home the points about why this matters and how the news could affect readers.”

**2nd Place: Daily Herald Media Group**, Steve Zalusky. A Moment of Hope: Syrians in Suburbs React to Fall of Assad: “Quick, timely story that shares the deep emotional impact to locals of what could just be a dry report about faraway news.”

**3rd Place: Chicago Tribune**, Angie Leventis Lourgos. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine

## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AWARD

### Division B

**1st Place: Community News Brief**, Macomb, Darcie Shinberger. Lawsuit Filed - Shooting death (by police) of four-year-old Terrell Miller: “It is clear that the work of Community News Weekly aided in the public understanding of the facts in this case. Gather-

ing documents from police agencies is often riddled with red tape. While it seems the process took time, those involved in the case were able to know the true actions of law enforcement because of great journalism.”

**2nd Place: Community News Brief**, Macomb, Darcie Shinberger. Suspension & Separation Agreement of Local Hospital CEO.: “When it comes to the understanding of FOIA laws, knowing is half the battle. While others may have accepted what they were told about access to documents, the reporter knew that full access to records would paint the necessary picture to inform the public.”

**3rd Place: Glenview Journal**, Tom Robb. Navy Burn Pit Landfill Project Delayed After FOIA, Questions: “While the government continued to kick the can down the road, the newsroom understood that constant communication and record requests were necessary to keep the public informed of matters involving their health and safety.”

### Division C

**1st Place: The Prairie Press**, Paris, Robby Tucker. Maggots found in Paris nursing home resident’s foot wound: “Good use of FOIA information to reveal something that otherwise probably would never have come to light. Shows initiative of the reporter in following up on just an online post.”

**2nd Place: Republic-Times**, Waterloo, Scott Woodsmall & Corey Saathoff. FOIA award: Oak Hill ouster explained: “Seems little was revealed about why the senior center manager was ousted, so FOIA use was instrumental in getting the story out.”

**3rd Place: Ford County Chronicle**, Paxton, Will Brumleve. OMA violations

**4th Place: Kane County Chronicle**, Geneva, Brenda Schory. School bullying case

### Division D

**1st Place: The Telegraph**, Alton, Erik Hall & Jill Moon. Bethalto School Board coverage: “Very strong reporting and digging to get to the bottom of the drama and politics in the local school system. Great job. Keep up the good work for your community!”

**2nd Place: Daily Chronicle**, DeKalb, Megann Horstead. ISBE orders ‘corrective action’ for DeKalb School District 428 amid missing kindergartner complaint

### Division E

**1st Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Jeff D’Alessio. Champaign school district: “The story about Ramey did it for me. It’s one thing to gather information, another to put the heart behind the information.”

**2nd Place: Belleville News-Democrat**, Lexi Cortes. Public records tell the story of the Bost-Bailey race for Congress: “I liked the charts provided, making it easier to absorb the information gathered.”

**3rd Place: Belleville News-Demo-**

**crat**, Carolyn P. Smith. Problems at agency revealed, despite officials’ secrecy

**4th Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Jeff D’Alessio. Firearms reported stolen to area law-enforcement agencies

## GOVERNMENT BEAT REPORTING

### Division A

**1st Place: El Paso Journal**, Jennie Kearney. El Paso City Council: “Good overall work. Variety of coverage”

**2nd Place: DuPage County Chronicle**, Wheaton, Kevin Beese. Government beat reporting

**3rd Place: Forest Park Review**, Jessica Mordacq. Forest Park planning & zoning commission beat

### Division B

**1st Place: Elk Grove Journal**, Tom Robb. Dissolution Of A Fire District: “Robb left no stone unturned in covering the months long saga of dissolving the fire district. The stories are thorough and informative. The sourcing from multiple government agencies provides depth that gives the reader a clear picture of the process.”

**2nd Place: Riverside-Brookfield Landmark**, Trent Brown. Riverside and Brookfield village board beat reporting: “Brown is consistent in his detailed coverage of government council meetings. The quotes from various sources add depth to the ongoing issues of the community. Links to outside sources and charts help paint a broad picture for the reader.”

**3rd Place: The Commercial-News**, Danville, Amy Graham-McCarty. City of Danville agrees to \$1.385 million settlement with consulting firm: “Graham-McCarty brought to life what was clearly a fairly dramatic city council meeting. Breaking down the details allows residents to learn how the outcome will directly affect their day-to-day lives.”

### Division C

**1st Place: Ford County Chronicle**, Paxton, Will Brumleve. Paxton City Council gas station project: “Reading these stories made me feel like I was at the meetings. Enjoyed hearing from multiple members of the board and from the community on both sides of the issue.”

**2nd Place: Ford County Chronicle**, Paxton, Will Brumleve. Wind farms

**3rd Place: The Hinsdalean**, Pamela Lannom. Education beat

### Division D

**1st Place: Chicago Daily Law Bulletin**, Grace Barbic. Illinois Supreme Court beat: “Barbic does a great job of distilling rulings into their meaning, and though these are written for a legal audience, they avoid jargon that a reader not in the field may not understand. Great reporting – the reporter knows the beat.”

**2nd Place: Sauk Valley Media**, Brandon Clark. Sterling rental inspection program: “Loved the balanced



**GENERAL NEWS PHOTO** Division A 1st Place: Wheaton Suburban Life, Sandy Bressner



**GENERAL NEWS PHOTO** Division C 1st Place: Austin Weekly News, Chicago, Sam Tucker



**GENERAL NEWS PHOTO** Division D 1st Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Mark Busch



**GENERAL NEWS PHOTO** Division B 1st Place: Beecher City Journal, P.J. Ryan

presentation of the issues at hand. Well-done coverage of the meetings and further reporting and writing of an important issue arising from the meeting.”

**3rd Place: Sauk Valley Media**, Brandon Clark. Sterling housing shortage/issues: “Good solid reporting, clear writing, all the explanation a reader would need to understand the situations.”

**4th Place: The Telegraph**, Alton, Scott Cousins. Madison County Board coverage: “Good explanation and unbiased coverage of silly, simple issue growing into an embarrassing bout of political name-calling.”

## Division E

**1st Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Jeff D’Alessio. Champaign school district: “D’Alessio paints a broad but detailed picture of the intricate and sometimes contentious activities of the school board. The stories give the community all the information they need to get involved and make informed decisions.”

**2nd Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Samuel Lisec. Champaign County courts: “Lisec thoroughly covers all aspects of the criminal justice system in this serious of well developed stories. Special detail to the local and statewide implications of the court system give an in-depth look into how decisions affect the entire community.”

**3rd Place: Belleville News-Democrat**, Kelly Smits. Accountability coverage of southwestern Illinois school districts: “Smits uses a series of stories to feature the ongoing updates of the local school system. The feature showing a breakdown of principals and superintendents provides invaluable information.”

## Division F

**1st Place: Chicago Tribune**, Olivia Olander. State Government Reporting: “A well-balanced selection of articles that take statewide government issues and localize them through a mix of personal stories, research and interviews with experts.”

**2nd Place: Chicago Tribune**, Sarah Freishtat. CTA coverage: “This was a tough category as so many of these entries were deserving. This one stood out with its ability to keep the reader’s attention through a mixture of well-done storytelling and research.”

**3rd Place: Chicago Tribune**, Dan Petrella. Illinois Democrats look to spread influence throughout Midwest: “This was a tough category as so many of these entries were deserving. These stood out as they were very well-written articles, balanced with a ton of research and facts.”

**4th Place: Chicago Sun-Times**, Brett Chase. Brett Chase, reporting on environmental issues: “This was a tough category as so many of these entries were deserving. This one stood out for its balance of personal connections with expert interviews.”

## BUSINESS/ECONOMIC REPORTING

### Division A

**1st Place: DuPage County Chronicle**, Wheaton, Kevin Beese. SCARE TACTICS: “I thoroughly enjoyed this submission. Great writing, really descriptive. Loved the story of a young kid setting goals and achieving them through adversity. Thank you for including multiple voices in the story. Would have liked to see an exterior shot of that haunted old building.”

**2nd Place: Winnebago Chronicle**, Rockford, Lynne Conner. Rockford mainstay makes fresh start

**3rd Place: Kendall Chronicle**, Yorkville, Jack McCarthy. Ribfest officially shuts down

**4th Place: Kendall Chronicle**, Yorkville, Jack McCarthy. Raring to read

### Division B

**1st Place: Suburban Chronicle**, Geneva, Jack McCarthy. Aurora’s big idea: “Strong background and easy to understand. Well done explaining the impact it would have on readers.”

**2nd Place: Community News Brief**, Macomb, Darcie Shinberger. Real Estate Taxes Explained

**3rd Place: Community News Brief**, Macomb, Lynne Campbell. Marshalltown’s Purchase of Vaughan & Bushnell Mfg

### Division C

**1st Place: Illinois Times**, Springfield, Dean Olsen. High expectations: “This simple feature story about a unique local business develops into a trend piece that explores how the business fits into a larger industry. The writer skillfully weaves background research into a compelling narrative with a local angle. That’s how it’s done!”

**2nd Place: Ford County Chronicle**, Paxton, Will Brumleve. Ford County small businesses: “The submissions include well-written stories that explore unique local businesses.”

**3rd Place: Ford County Chronicle**, Paxton, Will Brumleve. Business closures: “Everyone hates to lose a local business, but the writers do a good job explaining the loss, including personal narratives.”

**4th Place: The Galena Gazette**, Murphy Obershaw. Long-time passion for bees turns into bzzness: “This feature highlight a young entrepreneur and his unique business. The story is compelling without becoming trite.”

### Division D

**1st Place: Herald & Review**, Decatur, Tony Reid. Innovafeed expands in Decatur: “Great agri-business coverage, very thorough and clear writing with attention to writing style. Significant subject matter with high local interest.”

**2nd Place: Daily Southown**, Tinley Park, Paul Eisenberg. Paul Eisenberg business profiles: “Good coverage of an individual business, high local interest, high significance to the

area’s history. Story is thorough/well researched and clearly written.”

**3rd Place: Breeze-Courier**, Taylorville, Elyse Clayton. Sloan Implement moving to Edinburg

**4th Place: Journal Gazette & Times-Courier**, Mattoon, Rob Stroud. Emerald Acres’ first Black Friday

### Division E

**1st Place: Belleville News-Democrat**, Lexi Cortes. Metro-east mobile home parks bought by outside investment firm leave tenants ‘suffering’: “This is the entry that most stuck with me. Its span from trailer park owners trapped in states of disrepair to faraway vulture capitalist made a lasting impression.”

**2nd Place: Journal Star**, Peoria, JJ Bullock. Chase Building saga: “Tenacious series of detailed reports, with a very colorful character front and center. I hope future stories speculate on what the city will be forced to do if the owner continues to neglect that important building.”

**3rd Place: Journal Star, Peoria**, Cassidy Waigand. The cost of credit: “Swipe fees: picking away at consumers. Fine reporting, from the supportive local diner to national-level conflicts over proposed federal legislation. Bottom line: The little guys take the hit, and this story lays out their limited options.”

**4th Place: The Dispatch · The Rock Island Argus**, Moline, Gretchen Teske & Sarah Watson. ‘Worst decision they ever made’: “Important subject. Food deserts are hallmarks of neighborhoods in economic decline, and the authors did a good job painting the big picture. Though a source called the store closure a mistake, the authors made clear this is a step in a steep downward spiral.”

### Division F

**1st Place: Chicago Tribune**, Lisa Schencker & Emily Hoerner. Abbott baby formula: “This was a very tough decision, but this piece stood out. Compassionate storytelling, with an accountability lens, handsomely written.”

**2nd Place: Chicago Tribune**, Lizzie Kane & Talia Soglin. Verbal abuse, a ‘sex-driven’ culture

**3rd Place: Chicago Sun-Times**, Stephanie Zimmermann. “Illinois’ most complained-about car insurance companies and how consumers can protect themselves”

**4th Place: Chicago Tribune**, John Lippert & Sarah Freishtat. Belt Junction

## OBITUARY TRIBUTE

### Division A

**1st Place: Forest Park Review**, Jessica Mordacq. Dave Novak, former park district director, dies at 73

### Division B

**1st Place: Elk Grove Journal**, Tom Robb. Trailblazing ‘Definition Of A Public Servant’ Remembered: “Liked the way the writer showed what Nanci Vanderweel meant to her community

and the way others there felt about her accomplishments.”

**2nd Place: Cass County Star-Gazette**, Beardstown, Jason Brockschmidt.

Tiger Basketball loses a legend

**3rd Place: The Leader-Union**, Vandalia, Tony Angeloni, Susie Pontious & Lovetta Lockart. To Our Leader / In memory of Greg Hoskins

### Division C

**1st Place: Ford County Chronicle**, Paxton, Will Brumleve. Ed was ‘one cool dude’: “This writer has a knack for these kinds of pieces. One of the things that sets this one apart is that he’s able to use a strong news peg to lead the reader into the story of this person’s life. He weaves a compelling story through strong detail and narrative.”

**2nd Place: The Galena Gazette**, Murphy Obershaw. Goodbye, Sarah Newton: “When I read a piece like this, I want to come away feeling like I know what the person was like and regret not actually having known him or her. This piece creates exactly that feeling so well! From the details and quotes used to the photos included, it created a complete package.”

**3rd Place: Ford County Chronicle**, Paxton, Mindy Basi. ‘Doc’ touched many lives as community pillar: “This piece has a strong narrative created by the inclusion of compelling information about this person’s life. It’s a good story and makes a good read.”

**4th Place: Ford County Chronicle**, Paxton, Will Brumleve. Somber and silent: “This is another piece that makes a good use of a news peg to create a compelling story. The narrative flow keeps the reader interested and moving through the story all the way to the end, a high compliment for such a long story.”

### Division D

**1st Place: The Telegraph**, Alton, Pete Hayes. Drew never met a stranger: “This tribute effectively captured the heaviness felt by the community in response to this loss. Also obits are so sad and I hate that I have to read them ever.”

**2nd Place: Journal-Courier, Jacksonville**, David C.L. Bauer. Race community shocked, saddened by tragic Jacksonville Speedway accident

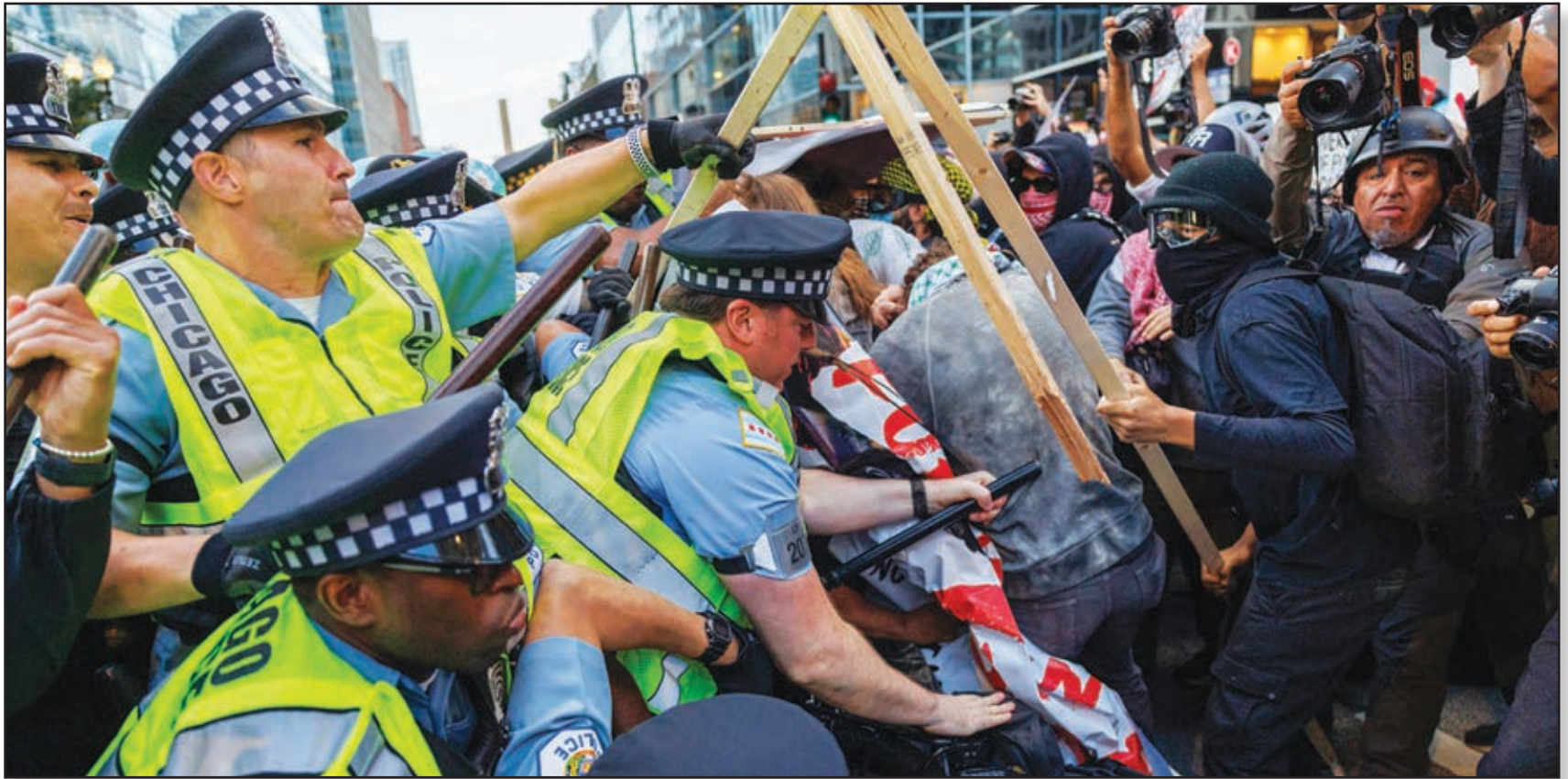
**3rd Place: Journal-Courier**, Jacksonville, Angela Bauer. A light on the path: Neighbors tweak luminaria tradition to honor friend

**4th Place: The Telegraph**, Alton, Jill Moon. Roe Watts, an Alton JC Penney legend, dies unexpectedly

### Division E

**1st Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Jana Wiersema. A man of his time: “From the headline, use of photos and the story itself, the writer does a phenomenal job showcasing the impact Professor Hannon had on his local community and beyond. Great work!”

**2nd Place: Belleville News-Democrat**, Joshua Carter, Todd Eschman



**GENERAL NEWS PHOTO** Division F 1st Place: Chicago Tribune, Armando L. Sanchez



**GENERAL NEWS PHOTO** Division E 1st Place: Belleville News-Democrat, Joshua Carter



**FEATURE PHOTO** Division B 1st Place: Beecher City Journal, P.J. Ryan



**FEATURE PHOTO** Division D  
1st Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Mark Busch

& Carolyn P. Smith. St. Clair County man fought for years to save his home  
**3rd Place: Journal Star**, Peoria, Mike Kramer. ‘Larger than life’: Creve Coeur honors late beloved founder of cruise-in fundraiser  
**4th Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Luke Taylor. ‘Campus fixture’ had friends in every bar

#### Division F

**1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times**, Mitch Dudek. “Dr. Kathryn Anne Altonji, a new mother and rising star at ShirleyRyan Ability Lab, has died at 34”: “Great lede.”

**2nd Place: Chicago Tribune**, Christy Gutowski. Lee Harris dies shortly after exoneration

**3rd Place: Daily Herald Media Group**, Eric Peterson. ‘Schaumburg Has Lost A Legend’

### SPORTS NEWS

#### Division Daily

**1st Place: The Herald-News**, Joliet, Rob Oesterle. Class 3A baseball: AJ Zweeres’ gamble comes up golden: “Simply put, a master class in how to write a game story. ...Lead grabs attention and raises questions that are answered later on. Emotional ending quote also tugs on the heartstrings a bit. Excellent work creating/resolving conflict, developing important characters and sketching out the course of the game through the key moments and defining details. Very meaningful reading experience that keeps the scope of the victory in context, as only clinching third place, but still sums up the satisfaction of ending the season on a win.”

**2nd Place: The Times**, Ottawa, Brian Hoxsey. Armour’s late bucket carries Serena into sectional title game: “No wasted words in this gamer that highlights redemption on the go-ahead shot, and gives great insight into the Xs and Os and gut decisions that decided a key playoff win.”

**3rd Place: Chicago Tribune**, Dan Wiederer. Caleb Williams ready to roar: “Well-written draft night piece that covers a lot of great ground. It’s a big, appetizing slice of deep-dish pizza for hungry Bears fans, but also doesn’t get carried away with the hype, and acknowledges some cold-hard reality that may not go down as easy. Especially love the lead, which describes exactly how I think any of us would play out the experience of getting drafted No. 1 in our daydreams.”

**4th Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Bob Asmussen. Former Champaign Central pitching standout makes his major league debut: “Good job capturing the emotion and excitement of a hometown kid making it to the big time. Love that you got right to an account of the ‘magic moment’ when he got the news.”

#### Division NonDaily

**1st Place: Lombard Suburban Life**, Joshua Welge. Montini sophomore QB Israel Abrams shines in the mo-

ment, salutes senior teammate: “Captivating writing, good pictures, and videos of the games make the stories easy to read and fun to follow. Coach and player interviews give the pieces even more depth. Shaw Local’s stories check all the boxes for me.”

**2nd Place: The Prairie Press**, Paris, Robby Tucker. UNDEFEATED: Lady Redbirds complete golden season, bring home state championship with win over Eureka: “Good writing, good pictures and use of pictures, and a good style for sports news.”

**3rd Place: The Galena Gazette**, Dan Burke. Pirates win 10th straight regional: “Good writing and good action shots. The quotes were also timely and informative. Good style of sports news writing.”

### SPORTS FEATURE

#### Division Daily

**1st Place: Belleville News-Democrat**, Todd Eschman. Who was ‘Bullet’ Bob Turley and why is he painted on the side of a metro-east building?: “An interesting and engaging feature that tells a story of a player many people may not know about. Exactly what you want to do with a feature story. Excellent work.”

**2nd Place: Chicago Tribune**, Dan Wiederer. Developing Caleb Williams: “An informative and extremely detailed work. An excellent display of enterprise writing.”

**3rd Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Zach Piatt. Sky is the limit: “A very interesting look into an athlete’s development. Clean, concise and to the point without leaving anything out. Great job.”

**4th Place: Chicago Tribune**, Stacy St. Clair. Tribune Olympic coverage: “A great example of how a reporter can find interesting stories at such a big event.”

#### Division NonDaily

**1st Place: The Prairie Press**, Paris, Robby Tucker. My friend, Willie: “Tremendous, tremendous story. For as much as been written about Willie Mays and everything he accomplished, this humanized him more than any obituary could.”

**2nd Place: Naperville Sun**, Tess Kenney. Nicky Lopez comes home  
**3rd Place: Bureau County Republican**, Princeton, Kevin Hieronymus. BV coaches come in together, go out together

**4th Place: The Galena Gazette**, Murphy Obershaw. A local pro’s journey with adaptive skateboarding

### FEATURE WRITING

#### Division A

**1st Place: The Lexingtonian**, Emilee Bratcher & Laurie Sleeter. I Know it All Ends Tomorrow: “Sweet story, well written and photographed.”

**2nd Place: El Paso Journal**, Jennie Kearney. Hoping to be home for Christmas

**3rd Place: Winnebago Chronicle**,

Rockford, Lynne Conner. Celebrating a worldwide legacy

**4th Place: Forest Park Review**, Jessica Mordacq. Ferrara Pan’s Silvia Avila ‘straw-struck’ by scarecrow likeness

#### Division B

**1st Place: The Mendota Reporter**, Brandon LaChance. One of Randy & Judy Phillips’ last wishes: “Good, informative story with a lot of emotion.”

**2nd Place: Riverside-Brookfield Landmark**, Trent Brown. Wally’s Waffles is taking on the world one waffle at a time: “Fun story, well written, entertaining.”

**3rd Place: Robinson Daily News**, Randy Harrison. Old man and dog: “Lots of good information based on an old photo, which leads to local history and even traces the photographer’s career.”

#### Division C

**1st Place: Cook County Chronicle**, Chicago, Kevin Beese. ‘Every kid deserves love’: “A beautiful story of unselfish love. With so many children in the foster care system, it highlights a true need. Well-written.”

**2nd Place: Wednesday Journal of Oak Park & River Forest**, Jack Helbig. He went that way: Former Oak Parker chases memories of his father, a chimp and a kidnapping: “Even though it involves a situation that could’ve turned out tragically, there’s a fun element to the story. It had a nice rhythm to it and Jonathan Pitts sounds like quite a character.”

**3rd Place: The County Chronicle**, Tuscola, David Porter. Candy Crumble: “Loved the history of this and the historic photos added so much to the story. I was so interested that I did a search to read any follow-ups, and I did find a few.”

**4th Place: The Journal-News**, Hillsboro, Isaiah Atkins. Litchfield Author Profiles 30-Year Hunt For I-70 Killer: “Lots of facts; great flow to the story. Good overall read”

#### Division D

**1st Place: The Telegraph**, Alton, Erik Hall. Jacoby Arts Center battles uncertain future: A safe haven in peril: “A well-written in-depth report that equally balances both sides of the issue with statements Jacoby Art Center and AltonWorks, while also given a deep history of Jacoby Art Center and its important to its community. Showing tax forms and other documents shows great care to go a step beyond what is usually seen in feature stories and allows the public to fact check for themselves and make decisions on how to react to the story. Top-tier work.”

**2nd Place: Herald & Review**, Decatur, Tony Reid. 75 years after St. Anthony Hospital fire

**3rd Place: The Edwardsville Intelligencer**, Scott Marion. Edwardsville mourns as its beloved Newt the Trail Cat passes away

**4th Place: Breeze-Courier**, Taylorville, Elyse Clayton. Emerald Gardens

### Division E

**1st Place: The Dispatch** • The Rock Island Argus, Moline, Gannon Hanevold. Timeless Tickets series: “This entry stood out from the crowded pool of contenders not only for the depth and scope of the series, but for the impactful writing and ledes. Quantity doesn’t always mean quality, but in this instance, we get both.”

A trip down memory lane, one concert at a time, one ticket at a time, it succeeded in creating a time capsule of not only the show itself, but of the community when the show was in town. Even people who aren’t music junkies like the author would appreciate this unique approach to history through the lens of music – and thanks to the author people will have this as a resource to look back on in the future. The Timeless Tickets series was no doubt something readers looked forward to every edition. A project this large requires passion to see it through to the end with so much thoughtfulness and attention to detail. It’s easy to see it was a labor of love. Bravo!”

**2nd Place: The Pantagraph**, Bloomington, Brendan Denison. Remembering the “Incident at Kickapoo Creek”

**3rd Place: The Dispatch • The Rock Island Argus**, Moline, Anthony Watt & Gannon Hanevold. The flyer that got away

**4th Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Samuel Lisec. ‘The answer to my prayer is no’

#### Division F

**1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times**, Lauren FitzPatrick. \*Mr. Duncan’s disciples”: “I love, love, love these stories. But I’m a chorister so not entirely objective. As a journalist, I admire that Lauren FitzPatrick developed these stories from her find at the record shop, tracking the songs to the many people who sang them. And the partnership with WBEZ was genius. Brilliant, joyful project.”

**2nd Place: Chicago Tribune**, Nell Salzman. Migrant amputee marries longtime love: “Holy smokes, what a story! And so useful for our times. This will make a great BOOK (or a MOVIE). Incredible.”

**3rd Place: Chicago Tribune**, Christy Gutowski. Operation Purple Heart: “Kudos on this massive research effort combined with heart-rending stories of bravery under fire, combined with heartwarming stories of descendants reunited with parts of their ancestry.”

**4th Place: Chicago Tribune**, Christopher Borrelli. Social media influencers at the DNC: “Revealed things I didn’t know and which really interested me, about content creators and how they figure in political discourse.”

### FEATURE WRITING - PERSONALITY PROFILE

#### Division A

**1st Place: El Paso Journal**, Rita Drake. Judge Feeney retires: “The full scope of



**FEATURE PHOTO** Division C 1st Place: The Galena Gazette, Mark VanOsdol



**FEATURE PHOTO** Division E 1st Place: The Dispatch · The Rock Island Argus, Moline, Roy Dabner



**FEATURE PHOTO** Division F 1st Place: Daily Herald Media Group, Brian Hill

Judge Feeney's career was interesting and laid out very well. Good work."  
**2nd Place: El Paso Journal**, Jennie Kearney. Haas named Assistant Coach of the Year  
**3rd Place: Rockton-Roscoe News**, Jean Seegers. Family tragedy leads to fulfilling career

#### Division B

**1st Place: Community News Brief**, Macomb, Darcie Shinberger. The Boy Who Loved Spiderman: "While the framing and format could have been improved somewhat, the raw, unfiltered nature of the material and the opportunity to provide a voice to an overlooked woman at the center of the tragedy lift this piece upward."

**2nd Place: The Commercial-News**, Danville, Kaighla White. A musical life: "A wonderfully written piece that captures the story of the educator, the creation of the piano lab, and the benefits musical education accrues to the students."

**3rd Place: The Commercial-News**, Danville, Kaighla White. Spreading happiness one bicycle at a time: "A nice profile, very lean and tightly written with strong central focus."

**4th Place: Community News Brief**, Macomb, Darcie Shinberger. Thrills, Chills & Black Comedy: MHS Grad Heads to Tribeca Film Fest: "This was a fun profile that breaks out of the usual cast of veterans, local educators, and distinguished elders. Trimming some of the fat and sharpening the focus would have raised this higher in the rankings, but a very good piece with an abundance of images accompanying it."

#### Division C

**1st Place: The Galena Gazette**, Murphy Obershaw. Goodbye, Sarah Newton: "The headline got me first. The writing next. Well compiled and put together."

**2nd Place: The Prairie Press**, Paris, Bethany Wagoner. Turning pain into poetry

**3rd Place: The Prairie Press**, Paris, Bethany Wagoner. Standing against the stigma

**4th Place: The Prairie Press**, Paris, Bethany Wagoner. Paris resident finds syrupy success

#### Division D

**1st Place: Herald & Review**, Decatur, Tony Reid. From Mississippi to longtime home at Caterpillar in Decatur: "Nice work, Tony. Your well-chosen words weave a wonderful portrait. I feel as though I met Sherley and walked hand-in-hand with her through her story, told in her words. Great choice and use of quotes, especially the first and last, which set up and wrap up a story. You've given us storytellers a shining example to follow and a reminder of just why we chose and continue to choose the job."

**2nd Place: Herald & Review**, Decatur, Donnette Beckett. Rotonda Montgomery: "Great job, Donnette. When I finished, I felt as though I

knew Rotonda and had spoken to her myself. Good features hinge on the writer's ability and desire to get to know the subject and show us life through his or her eyes. After reading your piece, I want to hug her and give her a high-five. Your writing made that happen. Your quotes are excellent and your selection of the first and last - a very important point as they set up and wrap up a story - is spot on. I want to read more of your stuff. Keep up the exceptional work."

**3rd Place: The Edwardsville Intelligencer**, Scott Marion. She overcame addiction - and the suicide of 3 brothers. Now she's helping others: "Nice work. I could almost feel Christina's pain and revel in her triumph."

**4th Place: Sauk Valley Media**, Charlene Bielema. River Country's Ramirez reaches third decade behind the mic: "Nice solid piece, Charlene. You've paid great homage to someone who has spent a lifetime doing what he loves. Your words convinced me he has lived his calling."

#### Division E

**1st Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Luke Taylor. It's in their DNA: "Though I am a bit biased, my sister is a lifelong Nurse and now Nurse Practitioner."

**2nd Place: Journal Star**, Peoria, David Eminian. The story of a hero and the life he saved

**3rd Place: Journal Star**, Peoria, JJ Bullock. Life after the Chicago Ripper Crew

**4th Place: The Pantagraph**, Bloomington, D. Jack Alkire. D Day veteran reflects on 80th anniversary

#### Division F

**1st Place: Chicago Tribune**, Christy Gutowski. Operation Purple Heart: "I loved how the lead drew me in - I felt like I was already in the middle of the story, and had to keep going. I also love how there's little bit of everything - history, mystery, public records requests and heart-warming results. Great job breaking up each recipient's story, too."

**2nd Place: Chicago Tribune**, Christopher Borrelli. Gary Willis at 90: "Absolutely loved the description of Willis."

**3rd Place: Chicago Tribune**, Christopher Borrelli. Buddy Guy at 88: "I loved the storytelling in this one, but read it after another piece by the same reporter, and I picked up the writing style right away."

#### EDITORIAL PAGE

##### Division Daily

**1st Place: The Dispatch - The Rock Island Argus**, Moline, Tom Martin. Editorial pages from the Dispatch-Argus: "Well rounded, diverse opinions. Well put together pages."

**2nd Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Staff.

**3rd Place: Daily Herald Media Group**, Jim Slusher & Editorial Board.

##### Division NonDaily

**1st Place: The Journal-News**, Hillsboro, Staff: "Great layout, interesting little details like with the graphic of the shadowbox. Loved the letters to the editors, especially the one from Randy West. Your community has some naturally gifted writers, it's great that so many of them write in to your newspaper!"

**2nd Place: The Hinsdalean**, staff: "Clean layout, very easy to read. Varied styles of writing presented with multiple perspectives from readers which is always great."

**3rd Place: Ford County Chronicle**, Paxton, Staff.

**4th Place: The Galena Gazette**, Staff.

#### STORY/SERIES - AGRICULTURAL STORY

##### Division Daily

**1st Place: Chicago Tribune**, Karina Atkins. Collision of tech and agriculture: "Outstanding series of articles that explore alternative energy sources and other ag-related tech issues. Good array of sources, compelling narrative and strong images make this package stand out among the entries."

**2nd Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Luke Taylor. Railroad reliant

**3rd Place: The Dispatch - The Rock Island Argus**, Moline, Thomas Geyer. Farmers worry about length of downturn

**4th Place: Belleville News-Democrat**, Joshua Carter. Most of the nation's horseradish is grown in southwest Illinois. What makes area special?

##### Division NonDaily

**1st Place: Ford County Chronicle**, Paxton, Will Brumleve. A LOT ON THE LINE: "Following a controversial and impactful development, the series on a carbon sequestration project captures how the decision could impact the farmers who grow corn for ethanol, local government that must respond in an emergency and the citizens who are part of both. The journalism is impartial, yet shows concern for all involved through thorough reporting and good story-telling. Excellent."

**2nd Place: The Prairie Press**, Paris, Robby Tucker. Prairie Wolf and solar sheep form unique partnership: "This fun feature story captures a slice of agriculture that we don't often think about. Nice work finding a fun story and showing why it's also important. Nice details."

**3rd Place: Ford County Chronicle**, Paxton, Mindy Basi & Will Brumleve. Ford County's first solar farm: "Following the machinations of local government can be tedious, but this series follows the steps well to show the concerns and potential impacts of the county's first solar farm."

**4th Place: Cook County Chronicle**, Chicago, Tim Alexander. Alliance seeks to bring conservation and agriculture together to preserve ecosystem: "This feature story brings together two groups that often are unnecessarily at odds by highlighting

the concerns of both. Good work."

#### ORIGINAL COLUMN

##### Division A

**1st Place: Forest Park Review**, Tom Holmes: "The author's voice really comes through in each of the columns. The agnostic column was especially stellar."

**2nd Place: Forest Park Review**, John Rice.

**3rd Place: The Amboy News**, Brandon LaChance.

**4th Place: The Normalite**, Normal, Don Meyer & Laurie Sleeter. Our Farming Roots

##### Division B

**1st Place: The Commercial-News**, Danville, Amy Graham-McCarty. Silent no more: #MeToo: "An honest and chilling recollection of a tragic event. The personal touch adds great clarity to a widespread story."

**2nd Place: The Mendota Reporter**, Brandon LaChance.

**3rd Place: Cass County Star-Gazette**, Beardstown, Sally Lael. The fun of little boys

**4th Place: Cass County Star-Gazette**, Beardstown, Sally Lael. Carl never knew what hit him

##### Division C

**1st Place: Des Plaines Journal**, Todd Wessell. Off The Record: "Good, clear writing addressing serious issues from a local perspective."

**2nd Place: The Hinsdalean**, Pamela Lannom. Pamela Lannom: "Good use of isolated events to illustrate larger, more significant themes."

**3rd Place: The County Chronicle, Tuscola**, Tony Hooker. Hook, Line & Sink: "One of the better personal experience columns represented here."

##### Division D

**1st Place: Daily Southown**, Tinley Park, Staff. Paul Eisenberg: "Paul does a great job taking readers back into times and places of yesteryear, with stories and asides that I'm sure give him a strong following. Newspaper readers tend to be older and more drawn to history and place. These are the kinds of columns that show that newspapers still have great value even in the internet age."

**2nd Place: Sauk Valley Media**, Charlene Bielema.

**3rd Place: The Telegraph**, Alton, Joe Crawford.

**4th Place: Journal Gazette & Times-Courier**, Mattoon, Clint Walker. Throwback Machine

##### Division E

**1st Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Jill Pyrz: "Excellent articles that all bring attention to the needs of our communities and to the wonderful people helping to meet those needs! I hope your readers take advantage of the opportunities to make someone else's life better in some way."

**2nd Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Peggy Prichard: "I thoroughly enjoyed reading your articles.



**PORTRAIT/PERSONALITY** Division B 1st Place: Glenview Journal, Charles Miller



**PORTRAIT/PERSONALITY** Division A 1st Place: El Paso Journal, Carla Howard



**PORTRAIT/PERSONALITY** Division C 1st Place: The Hinsdalean, Jim Slonoff



**PORTRAIT/PERSONALITY** Division D 1st Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Mark Busch

They were an opportunity to simply embrace day-to-day life without the distractions of politics and mindless social media and to enjoy fond memories.”

**3rd Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Bob Asmussen.

**4th Place: The Pantagraph**, Bloomington, D. Jack Alkire. D. Jack Alkire, The Cutting Board

#### Division F

**1st Place: Daily Herald Media Group**, Jim Slusher. Jim Slusher’s Letter To Readers: “The author finds a way to mix commentary into real-world stories perfectly in these pieces. The efficiency of writing is apparent, as well.”

**2nd Place: Chicago Sun-Times**, Rummana Hussain: “The author is able to utilize powerful language while addressing potentially hot-button topics.”

**3rd Place: Chicago Tribune**, Staff. Nina Metz columns: “The author demonstrates a great balance between clever insight and a personable touch.”

**4th Place: Chicago Sun-Times**, Neil Steinberg: “The author handles a variety of topics exceedingly well.”

### SPORTS COLUMN

#### Division Daily

**1st Place: Chicago Tribune**, Dan Wiederer: “Feature column/Gamer column/Analysis column - All expertly written. That’s how you do it”

**2nd Place: Chicago Sun-Times**, Rick Morrissey: “Strongest opinions of the group”

**3rd Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Tom Kacich: “Good hockey analysis. Good feature on coach”

**4th Place: The Dispatch • The Rock Island Argus**, Moline, Staff. Dave Selvig columns: “Good variety”

#### Division NonDaily

**1st Place: The Mendota Reporter**, Brandon LaChance. Brandon LaChance: “I appreciate that your column layout ‘looks’ like a column and that you use a conversational style. Two of your three columns showed your thoughts from personal experience and the enjoyment you get from sports.”

**2nd Place: The County Chronicle**, Tuscola, Ben Crane. Sideline scoop: “The variety of topics covered in your columns kept my interest. I like that you spoke from personal experience, that you addressed an issue plaguing high school sports in many states, and that you relayed an interesting story about the galloping ghost.”

**3rd Place: Bureau County Republican**, Princeton, Kevin Hieronymus. Hieronymus’ Hypothesis: “I like that two of your three submissions paid tribute to local figures who had contributed much to the sports scene. It was nice to read their stories.”

**4th Place: Ford County Chronicle**, Paxton, Andrew Rosten. Community support in tough times; Uneasy situation; I tried to warn you, IHSA

### PHOTO SERIES

#### Division A

**1st Place: El Paso Journal**, Rita Drake. Eclipse: “The two photos provide wonderful bookends for the event itself, highlighting the approaches and techniques of different eras, but also capturing the childlike spirit of the elder viewer, still fascinated by the astronomical event. The black and white photos also lend a timeless quality. Bravo.”

**2nd Place: The Lexingtonian**, Tim Lindenbaum & Laurie Sleeter. Tornadoes Take Down Towers: “Strong photos of electrical towers twisted into almost prehistoric, beastlike shapes. Safety considerations or concerns for the clarity of the photos might have prevented approaching closer for a slightly more dramatic angle, but the shot with wind turbines and the plant in the background is very good, seeming to almost hint that the wreckage could have been much worse.”

**3rd Place: Dekalb County Journal**, Sycamore, Bill Dwyer. South Bend celebration!

**4th Place: El Paso Journal**, Jennie Kearney. ‘Twas the Night Before Christmas

#### Division B

**1st Place: Beecher City Journal**, P.J. Ryan. Local Wings: “Absolutely wonderful pictures of ‘local wings’ in the Beecher City Journal. Each one tells its own story. Together, they make a much more impactful one. Great job! Keep it up!”

**2nd Place: Rochelle News-Leader**, Jeff Helfrich. RFD: No structures, standing crops affected by 100-acre field fire Friday in Esmond

#### Division C

**1st Place: The County Chronicle**, Tuscola, Staff. Candy Crumble: “This is how you tell a story. Great mix of new and old, the people at the heart of the company, and the building, which is its own personality. A lovely presentation that is making me want to plan a vacation solely to visit here.”

**2nd Place: The Hinsdalean**, Jim Slo-noff. Glass menagerie

**3rd Place: Cook County Chronicle**, Chicago, Karie Angell Luc. NASCAR

**4th Place: The Hinsdalean**, Jim Slo-noff. Dads, daughters twist and shake

#### Division E

**1st Place: Belleville News-Democrat**, Joshua Carter. Tour de Belleville: “Strong photoset with great composition, originality and technical skill demonstrated by photographer.”

**2nd Place: The Dispatch • The Rock Island Argus**, Moline, Roy Dabner.

Solar eclipse: “Great progression photoset with good composition and strong technical skill exhibited by photographer.”

**3rd Place: The Dispatch • The Rock Island Argus**, Moline, Roy Dabner. Umpire caught in an accidental block: “Great sports action photo series with good composition and strong techni-

cal skill exhibited by photographer.”

**4th Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Robin Scholz. Learning the ropes: “Good photoset with good composition and originality.”

### SPOT NEWS PHOTO

#### Division A

**1st Place: El Paso Journal**, Cara Howard. Firefighter uses jaws of life in rescue: “The victims’ emotions, despair, and pain mixes with the valiant effort of well-trained emergency personnel. A vehicle crash is an intense moment for all those involved, be that either the victim, crews or onlookers. While the victim still has a road to recovery, this photograph shows an element of success. The victim has been removed from the wreckage and now medical personnel can treat the victim’s injuries because the jaws of life saved the motorist. This is a touching visual of the day’s serious crash on the roadway.”

**2nd Place: The Lexingtonian**, Tim Lindenbaum & Laurie Sleeter. Fallen Tower: “This photograph illustrates the severe damage tornadoes can cause to power lines and how immense the winds can affect motorists’ travel and safety.”

**3rd Place: Forest Park Review**, Todd Bannor. Members of the Mid-America Carpenters Regional Council picket outside Parkway Dispensary: “This photograph is composed well.”

#### Division B

**1st Place: The Commercial-News**, Danville, Amy Graham-McCarty. Heat of the fire

#### Division C

**1st Place: The Prairie Press**, Paris, Bethany Wagoner. Fire photo, dog rescue: “Spot news photos are often taken at accidents, fires or other catastrophic events in some of the worst moments of people’s lives. This photo, while on the scene of one of those events, took a different direction and showcased humanity despite it all. Great job at looking for little moments in the chaos!”

**2nd Place: The Hinsdalean**, Jim Slo-noff. Firefighters save home: “Great use of composition here by using what little light was available during a dark scene!”

**3rd Place: Republic-Times**, Waterloo, Corey Saathoff. Fatal caboose fire: “A well-composed shot that shows the first responders in action.”

**4th Place: The Prairie Press**, Paris, Robby Tucker. Garage fire: “Another well-composed shot that showcases a touch of action from the first responder.”

#### Division D

**1st Place: The Telegraph**, Alton, John Badman. Consolation amid tragedy: “This photo artfully captures so much emotion in one frame: The depth of field including the crime scene tape, the tears on the woman’s face and their body language all tell a story of

profound grief.”

**2nd Place: Sauk Valley Media**, Alex T. Paschal. Dog rescue: “Who can resist a firefighter saving a dog’s life? I do wish the angle had been up and to the left just a bit.”

**3rd Place: The Telegraph**, Alton, John Badman. Aerial view of Alton’s Gordon Moore Park sinkhole: “This photo made me gasp. The only thing this photo needed to be perfect is people.”

#### Division E

**1st Place: The Dispatch • The Rock Island Argus**, Moline, Katelyn Metzger. Crews battle a large structure fire in Rock Island: “Wow! That’s a photo that fully grasps the severity of the story. Well done!”

**2nd Place: The Dispatch • The Rock Island Argus**, Moline, Roy Dabner. Rainbow lightning strike

**3rd Place: Belleville News-Democrat**, Joshua Carter. Victim of a drive-by

**4th Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Robin Scholz. Illinois-Michigan celebration

#### Division F

**1st Place: Daily Herald Media Group**, Paul Valade. House Explosion: “Good use of a drone to capture the devastation and scale of what looks to be a natural gas explosion. Sorry to see the homeowner died here.”

**2nd Place: Chicago Tribune**, Stacey Wescott. Teen mourned after fatal crash: “A lot of real and raw emotion here, though some might find this shot to be intrusive. Regardless, it effectively conveys the magnitude of the event.”

**3rd Place: Daily Herald Media Group**, Paul Valade. Lightning: “The lightning bolt makes this shot stand out.”

**4th Place: Daily Herald Media Group**, Paul Valade. Northern Lights: “Just a nice, competent shot of the Northern Lights.”

### GENERAL NEWS PHOTO

#### Division A

**1st Place: Wheaton Suburban Life**, Sandy Bressner. Field of Honor: “This is an incredibly moving photograph. The perspective, the subjects – everything is great. Nice shot!”

**2nd Place: Kendall Chronicle**, Yorkville, Kevin Beese. Aurora Vigil

**3rd Place: Forest Park Review**, Erica Benson. Forest Park Casket Races

#### Division B

**1st Place: Beecher City Journal**, P.J. Ryan. Greased Lightning: “The unmitigated joy on Rhodes’ face added to the motion of everything facing right (face, arm, pig’s head and legs) make this a great candid shot.”

**2nd Place: Riverside-Brookfield Landmark**, Erica Benson. Brookfield Cycling: “Wonderful motion and movement in this picture with the middle coming into focus as left and right blur into and out of frame.”

**3rd Place: Rosemont Journal**, Shawn



**PORTRAIT/PERSONALITY** Division E  
1st Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Robin Scholz



**PORTRAIT/PERSONALITY** Division F  
1st Place: Chicago Tribune, John J. Kim



**SPORTS PHOTO** Division A 1st Place: The Amboy News, Kip Cheek

Clisham. Let the Games Begin: “Love the seriousness of the girl’s face while she is ostensibly at play. Picture has good depth of field. Almost as if she is tossing the frisbee to the reader through the medium of the page.”  
**4th Place: Riverside-Brookfield Landmark**, Erica Benson. Riverside Parade

#### Division C

**1st Place: Austin Weekly News**, Chicago, Sam Tucker. Peace March, Austin Weekly News: “The photo captures plenty of action, vibrant color, and the tone of the event.”

**2nd Place: Wednesday Journal of Oak Park & River Forest**, Erica Benson. Mothers Day Rally

**3rd Place: Arlington Heights Journal**, Patrick Jasionowski. Star Swimmer Sendoff

**4th Place: Des Plaines Journal**, Dion Martorano. Golden Apple

#### Division D

**1st Place: Daily Chronicle**, DeKalb, Mark Busch. County Sheriff deputy’s funeral: “Gosh – great capture of moment, framed perfectly.”

**2nd Place: The Herald-News**, Joliet, Gary Middendorf. general news photo: “I love this photo, but there’s so much going on, it would have been nice to have only the man in front in focus so he stands out more, or if a cutline was provided to share why the background people were important to the image.”

**3rd Place: The Edwardsville Intelligencer**, Jason Koch. Cub Scout flag wave

**4th Place: Breeze-Courier, Taylorville**, Elyse Clayton. Little Miss

#### Division E

**1st Place: Belleville News-Democrat**, Joshua Carter. Mourning a father: “A very nice moment captured in a difficult situation. I love the wider view. It shows important details and context.”

**2nd Place: Belleville News-Democrat**, Joshua Carter. A Child’s Pride: “Nice moment, composition, and framing. The caption is also critical in this situation.”

**3rd Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Robin Scholz. UI Paralympics send-off: “Wonderful moment! It’s a joy to let your eye wander across the entire frame and take in the different expressions.”

**4th Place: The Dispatch · The Rock Island Argus**, Moline, Katelyn Metzger. Illinois naturalization ceremony: “Good job of capturing an important moment in Mr. Kalinde’s life.”

#### Division F

**1st Place: Chicago Tribune**, Armando L. Sanchez. Protesters scuffle with police: “Great news photo, tells story, shows conflict. Well-composed.”

**2nd Place: Chicago Tribune**, Armando L. Sanchez. Migrants journey to Chicago: “Good emotion on the subject’s face, enough of what is going on around her to tell the story.”

**3rd Place: Daily Herald Media Group**, Rick West. Viewing The Eclipse: “Good eclipse photo that is different, yet clearly tells what is happening.”

**4th Place: Chicago Tribune**, Armando L. Sanchez. New arrivals: “Beautiful story-telling.”

### FEATURE PHOTO

#### Division B

**1st Place: Beecher City Journal**, P.J. Ryan. Love is in the air ... and it’s noisy: “Just a very cool picture. Great clarity. Love the eyes and the colors!”

**2nd Place: The Commercial-News**, Danville, Amy Graham-McCarty. Heron County Park in full bloom

**3rd Place: Palatine Journal & Topics**, Patrick Jasionowski. Nice Night

**4th Place: Beecher City Journal**, PJ Ryan. Bee-utiful

#### Division C

**1st Place: The Galena Gazette**, Mark VanOsdol. ‘Up, up and away’: Balloons take flight for the Great Galena Balloon Race: “The glow of the colorful hot-air balloons framed by the cold grays of dusk makes for a beautiful photo. The people surrounding the balloons shooting the liftoffs with their cellphones makes this an even better shot. Well done!”

**2nd Place: The Hinsdalean**, Jim Slo-noff. Pile up on Madison: “This is not only a great photo but demonstrates that even in the digital age, some American kids are still getting outdoors and having a fun, old-fashioned dog pile. Great shot!”

**3rd Place: The Journal-News**, Hill-sboro, Mary Herschelmann. Lucky 113 For Irish Days: “I don’t love dum-dums but capturing this many in mid-air made for a terrific shot. I only hope the writer was wise enough to include the headline: “Suckers from truckers””

**4th Place: The Prairie Press**, Paris, Victoria Leitch. Fourth of July, Girl in splash park

#### Division D

**1st Place: Daily Chronicle**, DeKalb, Mark Busch. Dog sledding: “Names and faces. Photo captures the snow event. Expression on Mae’s face is priceless. Good work getting the name of the dog.”

**2nd Place: The Telegraph**, Alton, Jill Moon. Johnson’s Corner and Alton community mourn the tragic loss of Ashley Reno

**3rd Place: The Telegraph**, Alton, John Badman. A Murder of Crows on the Alton Riverfront

**4th Place: Breeze Courier**, Taylorville, Rachel LeBeane. Foggy Afternoon

#### Division E

**1st Place: The Dispatch · The Rock Island Argus**, Moline, Roy Dabner. Quad City Air Show: “Claiming first in this Feature Photo class truly must be commended. Each of the entries in this category were extremely well done. What stood out for this winning photograph was the multiple dynam-

ics of a vehicle on the ground and one airborne in unison. The movement was captured with the stream of smoke and parachutes. An additional aspect that makes the photo even better was the cropping. If cropped too tight, the element of distance would have been lost. Congratulations on your top-prize winner.”

**2nd Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Robin Scholz. Champaign County Fair food: “This photograph is a superb visual of Americana. This photo in a Feature Photo class with many worthy of winning stands out because of how these elder souls display kindness and love simply through the sharing of a corn dog at the county fair. The photographer showed a keen eye to capture this image.”

**3rd Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Robin Scholz. Villa Grove Ag Days: “It is rare in what could be considered a routine photograph of people walking at an event that is special. However, this photo is. There is definitely a showing of an inner peace watching a senior-citizen couple holding hands while walking on a beautiful day. Good job.”

**4th Place: The Dispatch · The Rock Island Argus**, Moline, Roy Dabner. Mutton Busting competition: “Dealing with livestock can be challenging. Just ask this young gentleman. The animal may have the upper hand in this image, but assuredly the youth got himself a memorable experience. Solid moment at the fair.”

#### Division F

**1st Place: Daily Herald Media Group**, Brian Hill. First-Day Worries: “Before even seeing the caption, that photo tells the story.”

**2nd Place: Chicago Tribune**, Vincent Alban. Father and son fireworks: “I love the excitement.”

**3rd Place: Chicago Tribune**, Eileen T. Meslar. Cooling off: “Beautiful photo.”

**4th Place: Chicago Tribune**, John J. Kim. Messy cicada

### PORTRAIT/PERSONALITY

#### Division A

**1st Place: El Paso Journal**, Carla Howard. Rural inventor - Jonathon Hostetler

#### Division B

**1st Place: Glenview Journal**, Charles Miller. Greetings

#### Division C

**1st Place: The Hinsdalean**, Jim Slo-noff. 60 seconds — Lelia Zou: “Great job at setting this portrait photo of a violin player in front of wall art depicting a violin. It really sets off the photo.”

**2nd Place: Ford County Chronicle**, Paxton, Will Brumleve. Booze Brothers: “Great framing that tells you what this story is about without having to read the story itself.”

**3rd Place: The Hinsdalean**, Jim Slo-noff. Gianelli departs as chief: “Very nicely composed photo with the two fire trucks and the new fire chief”

**4th Place: Ford County Chronicle**, Paxton, Will Brumleve. ‘Sad to see it go’: “Very good composition with the sign in the background.”

#### Division D

**1st Place: Daily Chronicle**, DeKalb, Mark Busch. Summer fun: “Photo has great colors, lighting and emotion. Nice effect with the shadows, too.”

**2nd Place: NewsTribune**, La Salle, Scott Anderson. Chester Weger

**3rd Place: The Herald-News**, Joliet, Gary Middendorf. portrait/personality photo

**4th Place: Breeze-Courier**, Taylorville, Elyse Clayton. Milo & Skylar

#### Division E

**1st Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Robin Scholz. Champaign legend: “The expressiveness of the subject’s face makes this photo. Cropping close to minimize distractions added impact.”

**2nd Place: The Dispatch · The Rock Island Argus**, Moline, Katelyn Metzger. Cavort Chef Rhea Vrana: “A portrait photo that shows action! Awesome!”

**3rd Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Robin Scholz. Mural smile: “Great juxtaposition of the real-life subject with the painted mural.”

**4th Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Robin Scholz. Sunflower smile: “Creative staging for the photo.”

#### Division F

**1st Place: Chicago Tribune**, John J. Kim. Showing off her Trump style: “Even with no face shown in this portrait, the reader knows the story. Great composition.”

**2nd Place: Daily Herald Media Group**, John Starks. Young Goatherd: “While this photo doesn’t tell the full story, the portrait of a boy climbing around barn makes you want to find out more about him.”

**3rd Place: Chicago Tribune**, Armando L. Sanchez. Caring for her daughter: “A heart-wrenching portrait done very well.”

**4th Place: Daily Herald Media Group**, Brian Hill. Horse Laugh: “Who doesn’t love a laughing horse?”

### SPORTS PHOTO

#### Division A

**1st Place: The Amboy News**, Kip Cheek. Coach Payne Gatorade shower: “State titles always are amazing opportunities to seize spirited emotions. Throughout sports, coaches being drenched with Gatorade has somewhat become the norm. What, however, makes this photograph a first-place winner is all the additional happiness viewed around the splash. Joy can be witnessed in the actions and faces of all in the photographic frame. Super moment caught with a super photo!”

**2nd Place: Dekalb County Journal**, Sycamore, Bill Dwyer. NIU upsets Notre Dame: “When a school (at least on paper) is not supposed to defeat an



**SPORTS PHOTO** Division D 1st Place: Effingham Daily News, Alex Wallner



**SPORTS PHOTO** Division B 1st Place: Elk Grove Journal, Dion Martorano



**SPORTS PHOTO** Division C 1st Place: Kane County Chronicle, Geneva, Sandy Bressner



**SPORTS PHOTO** Division E 1st Place: The Pantagraph, Bloomington, Clay Jackson

opponent, the victory means so much more. Looking at this photograph, the feelings of the NIU program are very evident. Photographer caught a true moment for a big 'W'."

#### Division B

**1st Place: Elk Grove Journal**, Dion Martorano. Conant Wins: "Celebration captured in a single image always is spectacular. Happiness is absolutely evident in this photographer's shot of the baseball players' excitement after winning the sectional championship. The players were winners on the diamond and the photographer was the winner for Sports Photo in this class against other solid entries. Great job!"  
**2nd Place: Glenview Journal**, Dion Martorano. State Champs: "The title is ours! That can be felt viewing this emotional hug following the state football triumph. In this loaded grouping of entries, this photograph is very deserving of this honored placing for Sports Photo."

**3rd Place: Pana News Palladium**, Cathy Jones. A vault in the clouds: "Perfect timing and flawless lighting at the state vault competition secured this photograph this placing in a Sports Photo category against quality entries. Well done."

**4th Place: Glenview Journal**, Joe Cukierski. Catch of the Day: "Concentration led to pulling in this pass in the game, but concentration also led to the photographer claiming a place in this Sports Photo class versus other very good entries. Congrats."

#### Division C

**1st Place: Kane County Chronicle**, Geneva, Sandy Bressner. State Swim Finals: "This one is real good. You can see the different emotions on just about every face, and you managed to get most of them in the frame. Great shot."

**2nd Place: The Galena Gazette**, Mark VanOsdol. Chestnut Mountain Little Big Nut: "Whatta shot. The sun rays, the angle, the color of his jacket adds to the shot. Not often you see skiing come across the desk, so it was cool to see something different."

**3rd Place: Ford County Chronicle**, Paxton, Andrew Rosten. GCMS student section cheers on volleyball player: "I like how unique the angle is. Being able to catch most of the crowd and the server is great. Nice job."

**4th Place: Niles & Park Ridge Journal**, Joe Cukierski. Heads Up: "The expression on his face is almost comical. A mob of players is falling on him out of bounds and he's just got this deadpan look. It reminds me of the Kawhi Leonard layup/dunk picture."

#### Division D

**1st Place: Effingham Daily News**, Alex Wallner. Ben Roedl competes: "This photo is so well composed and balanced, there's really no detail I can find to say it's not perfect. The depth of focus, symmetry of the runners and facial expressions - as the leader jumps right out of the frame with eyes

staring dead at you - are all as pristine as it gets. An amazing shot!"

**2nd Place: Herald & Review**, Decatur, Joseph Ressler. Time to celebrate: "Tremendous work capturing multiple layers of joy on the faces of subjects, including the little one in the bottom corner whose expression is a neat bonus. This photo tells a compelling story, and needs no words to do it."

**3rd Place: Breeze-Courier**, Taylorville, Lucas Domonousky. Camp Water: "The vivid color and great details here make it easy to feel like you're there experiencing all the fun of this summer afternoon from the perspective of either the splashes, and the splashiee."

**4th Place: Breeze-Courier**, Taylorville, Lucas Domonousky. THS Baseball Hype: "Unique celebration photo that captures plenty of emotion and meaning in simply how high some of the players are off the ground. The disappointed opposing spectators in the background provide a great layer of context as well."

#### Division E

**1st Place: The Pantagraph**, Bloomington, Clay Jackson. Gravity takes the horns: "Shows the most action while capturing the reactions of both the rider and the bull. Unique compared to all others."

**2nd Place: The Dispatch · The Rock Island Argus**, Moline, Roy Dabner. Wesley Kiptoo crosses the finish line of the QC Times Bix 7

**3rd Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Robin Scholz. Monticello-Unity football

**4th Place: Journal Star**, Peoria, Matt Dayhoff. Clear eyes, full hearts: Mom's Night at Washington High School football

#### Division F

**1st Place: Chicago Tribune**, Brian Cassella. Fencing victory: "Great photo that captures the joy of victory. Well done!"

**2nd Place: Daily Herald Media Group**, John Starks. Qualifying Cheer: "Wonderful photo made better by the reaction of the person in the background."

**3rd Place: Daily Herald Media Group**, Brian Hill. Fleet of Foot: "A great angle that really captures the energy and skill of these sprinters."

**4th Place: Daily Herald Media Group**, John Starks. Taking Flight: "Nice! A testament to the importance of looking past the obvious."

### SPORTS PHOTO - PORTRAIT/PERSONALITY

#### Division C

**1st Place: The Hinsdalean**, Jim Slonoff. Golfers look to fourth state competition: "I love the framing of the club heads. A simple, yet effective way to spruce up what could have been just a standard photo! Great job!"

**2nd Place: The Hinsdalean**, Jim Slonoff. Athlete profile - Finn Bergin:

"A nice profile photo that shows the effort of the player."

**3rd Place: Republic-Times**, Waterloo, Paul Baillargeon. Ready to coach softball: "Simply adding a ball and glove to a photo of a new coach enhances this photo tremendously."

**4th Place: Ford County Chronicle**, Paxton, Andrew Rosten. Lady Panthers set to start season: "Good job of having the team do something other than stand in a couple of rows for a photo."

#### Division E

**1st Place: The Dispatch · The Rock Island Argus**, Moline, Roy Dabner. Iowa's Caitlin Clark becomes the All-time leading scorer in NCAA Women's Division I: "The combination of colors works really well in this photo, and it's made even better by the fact that you can see almost all the players/coaches facial expressions. Shows the most personality out of all other photos."

**2nd Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Robin Scholz. Centennial track star

**3rd Place: The Dispatch · The Rock Island Argus**, Moline, Roy Dabner. Iowa Hawkeyes running back Kaleb Johnson

**4th Place: The Dispatch · The Rock Island Argus**, Moline, Roy Dabner. Hawkeye wave

#### Division F

**1st Place: Daily Herald Media Group**, John Starks. Pas Ndayishimiye: "Very cool shot. Nice angle and unique setting."

**2nd Place: Daily Herald Media Group**, John Starks. Ella Todd

**3rd Place: Daily Herald Media Group**, Joe Lewnard. Jaxson Davis

### ONLINE PHOTO SERIES/GALLERY

#### Division Daily

**1st Place: The Dispatch · The Rock Island Argus**, Moline, Katelyn Metzger. Community helps Brown Family with corn harvest: "Good story told with strong photos. They all work together to contribute to the story telling."

**2nd Place: The Pantagraph**, Bloomington, Clay Jackson. Fall color in Central Illinois: "Beautiful colors, and each image is obviously the result of forethought and patience. Only critique is to edit the gallery down more, removing repetitive images."

**3rd Place: Chicago Tribune**, Eileen T. Meslar & Pinar Istek. Lane Tech's quest to capture the sport's first IHSA girls flag football title: "Good selection, mix of action and feature."

**4th Place: The Pantagraph**, Bloomington, Clay Jackson. McLean County Fair Rodeo

#### Division NonDaily

**1st Place: The Hinsdalean**, Jim Slonoff. I never miss a beat: "The best photo series of all the entries. Great expressions and movement in the photos. Great job!"

**2nd Place: Ford County Chronicle**, Paxton, Andrew Rosten. GCMS su-

per-sectional photo gallery

**3rd Place: The Hinsdalean**, Jim Slonoff. All eyes on the sky

**4th Place: Ford County Chronicle**, Paxton, Andrew Rosten. Photo gallery of Cissna Park's volleyball team claiming third place at the state meet

### VIDEO JOURNALISM

#### Division All

**1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times**, Stefano Esposito & Zubaer Khan. "More than puppy love": "Wonderful story that's well told."

**2nd Place: The Pantagraph**, Bloomington, Clay Jackson. Hometown crowd cheers trick rider Lindy Lica at McLean County Fair: "Nice variety of shots, including some great stills, fit together to tell a nice story."

**3rd Place: The Dispatch · The Rock Island Argus**, Moline, Katelyn Metzger. The Calling Twins: "Good story in need of tighter editing, more natural sound, and wider variety of shots."

**4th Place: Chicago Sun-Times**, Pat Nabong & Stefano Esposito. "Hobby horse is a competitive sport. Just ask this Chicago teenager - and this reporter": "Fun story. Though I liked the reporter's 'ride along' I wanted to see and learn more about Mica Zandstra."

### DISTINGUISHED COVERAGE OF DIVERSITY

#### Division Daily

**1st Place: Belleville News-Democrat**, Lexi Cortes. Community waits for answers, more action, in response to failing sewers and health crisis: "Another fine series from Lexi Cortes. I would have entered it under hard news, though it is about a minority community. Great work doggedly documenting the problem over its long duration, the health impacts, the bureaucratic delays, and, ultimately, the failure to date to help this community with a horrible problem."

**2nd Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Jana Wiersema. Jana Wiersema: "I think Ms. Wiersema's collection of entries most represent 'diversity' journalism because they cover the type of news that has gone underreported for too long because it doesn't focus on the conventional mainstream. I think the food-desert and bicycle stories are perfect examples of spotlighting people addressing problems - lack of transportation and malnutrition - common to the underprivileged that deserve more attention from NEWS reporters across the board."

**3rd Place: The Telegraph**, Alton, Jill Moon. Stories of LGBTQ+ Lives and Community Impact: "Ms. Moon's stories read as though her readers are looking over her shoulder and helping her write them. Her familiarity with her non-mainstream audience glows with authenticity. It really paid off in uncovering the story that local police didn't bother to investigate the nature of Mr. Watts' death."



**SPORTS PHOTO** Division F 1st Place: Chicago Tribune, Brian Cassella



**SPORTS PHOTO - PORTRAIT/PERSONALITY** Division C  
1st Place: The Hinsdalean, Jim Slonoff



**SPORTS PHOTO - PORTRAIT/PERSONALITY** Division F  
1st Place: Daily Herald Media Group, John Starks

**4th Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Luke Taylor. Luke Taylor: "This is a good body of work that really lets readers get to know interesting individuals collectively known in the community as minorities. (Kudos to photographer on Sewing it up.) I encourage Mr. Taylor to go further – to investigate institutional causes of the problems his sources encounter. It's not only about bringing diversity to news reporting; it's even more about unleashing NEWS skills in underreported parts of our diverse world."

### Division NonDaily

**1st Place: The Hinsdalean**, Pamela Lannom & Ken Knutson. Diversity coverage: "The wide range of coverage demonstrates a commitment to covering all aspects of a community, even if the events or populations are small."

**2nd Place: Cook County Chronicle**, Chicago, Kevin Beese. Gays in Gospel  
**3rd Place: Ford County Chronicle**, Paxton, Andy Hudson. Down syndrome does not define who Evan is  
**4th Place: Cook County Chronicle**, Chicago, Kevin Beese. Swing at STEM

### INFORMATIONAL GRAPHIC

#### Division C

**1st Place: Austin Weekly News**, Chicago, Javier Govea. Navigating the heat with a COOL TREAT: "Good use of graphics to show more information about each location. Easy to read and understand quickly, which is the point of informational graphics."

**2nd Place: Austin Weekly News**, Chicago, Javier Govea. At Home on the Greater West Side: "This was a great idea to use an info graphic to share this information – it made it much easier to read, and was easy to follow."

#### Division E

**1st Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Jeff D'Alessio & Niko Dugan. A dream defined: "Good work connecting a lasting legacy to the local community. Nice layout using multiple mug shot style photos."

**2nd Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Jeff D'Alessio & Niko Dugan. Firearms reported stolen to area law enforcement

**3rd Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Jeff D'Alessio & Joel Leizer. Big bucks

### SINGLE PAGE DESIGN

#### Division A

**1st Place: DuPage County Chronicle**, Wheaton, Jack McCarthy. Ribfest officially shuts down: "I love the bold heading with a strong subhead and the way you married the image cutout with the text. Really strong design. I think anyone reading the paper would stop on this page and read this story!"

**2nd Place: The Lexingtonian**, Laurie Sleeter. Halloween

#### Division B

**1st Place: Riverside-Brookfield**

**Landmark**, Javier Govea. Can'tabis

#### Division C

**1st Place: Ford County Chronicle**, Paxton, Will Brumleve. September 11 front page: "All of the Ford County Chronicle's entries indicate the designer has an eye for very clean page design and combines that talent with solid news judgment and appropriately catchy headlines. Simply the way a newspaper page, and particularly a front page, should be put together."

**2nd Place: The Prairie Press**, Paris, Victoria Leitch. Front Page, December 27

**3rd Place: Cook County Chronicle**, Chicago, Jack McCarthy. Lollapalooza

**4th Place: Wednesday Journal of Oak Park & River Forest**, Javier Govea. They're back: 17-year cicadas return from underground

#### Division D

**1st Place: The Sentinel**, Mt. Vernon, Corey Johnson. 50 years of Orphan post-season football: "Layout draws the eye. Great use of the non-perpendicular lines. The 'negative strip' effect works very well to convey the history of the team."

**2nd Place: Breeze-Courier**, Taylorville, Elizabeth Wood. Butterflies

**3rd Place: Breeze-Courier**, Taylorville, Elyse Clayton. And The Tommy goes to...

**4th Place: The Sentinel**, Mt. Vernon, Scott Pinkowski & Kyle Pruden. Improvements made to Lions Park

#### Division E

**1st Place: Journal Star**, Peoria, Staff. Peoria Notre Dame girls basketball wins state championship: "Nice, clean modern layout. Good flow and easy on the eyes. Great photo showing the emotions of the celebration."

**2nd Place: Journal Star**, Peoria, Staff. Downtown Peoria at a crossroads  
**3rd Place: Belleville News-Democrat**, Staff. National Catholic pilgrimage

#### Division F

**1st Place: Daily Herald Media Group**, Kelly Vold. Suburban Olympics Front Page: "Nice use of spotlighting the Olympics from a local angle combined with national news and a bit of nostalgia. Three stories and layout avoid overwhelming the reader."

**2nd Place: Chicago Sun-Times**, Eric White. "Rock of ageless"

**3rd Place: Daily Herald Media Group**, Brian Shamie. Democratic Convention Front Page

### NEWSPAPER DESIGN

#### Division Daily

**1st Place: Daily Herald Media Group**, Staff: "Great use of different headline styles, photos and more to help increase the overall design quality. Well done!"

**2nd Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Staff.

**3rd Place: Chicago Daily Law Bulletin**, John Sadowski & Susan Englund.

#### Division NonDaily

**1st Place: The County Chronicle**, Tuscola, David Porter: "Great variety of topics with engaging visuals. I can tell this is a huge undertaking and the results are eye-catching and a pleasure to read. Good job!"

**2nd Place: Wednesday Journal of Oak Park & River Forest**, Staff: "This was a hard one – I was really impressed that the design and content could hold my attention for 44 pages – That's a huge feat these days! This is a great paper. Well-rounded and a feast for the eyes."

**3rd Place: The Hinsdalean**, Jim Slonoff.

### HEADLINE WRITING

#### Division Daily

**1st Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Joel Leizer: "This selection was the clear winner of the bunch, with a wonderful mix of witty and impactful headlines. 'A Killer Deal' effectively translates the dark humor of an all-you-can-eat promotion bankrupting a company, and the double meaning behind 'Blasting Off' is a pleasant surprise, nudging readers to do a double take when they read the caption and look at the photo. 'Claps and Gowns' and 'Courting the Public' use creative play on words that make the reader smile. 'Sex, Drugs, and Statutory Rape' is the outlier of this writer's entries due to the serious nature of the story, but he does an excellent job conveying the heaviness of the article with the headline, which ends unexpectedly and tragically with the phrase statutory rape. This headline writer is no one-trick pony."

**2nd Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Niko Dugan.

#### Division NonDaily

**1st Place: Ford County Chronicle**, Paxton, Will Brumleve: "The headline on the personal profile — The Man Behind the 'Stache — grabbed attention, especially when combined with the photo. Praying for a Miracle and Somber and Silent both encapsulated the emotion of their stories."

**2nd Place: The Hinsdalean**, Jim Slonoff.

**3rd Place: Ford County Chronicle**, Paxton, Andrew Rosten. Double trey; How sweet it is; Aw, how sweep; Sweep sensation; Ghosts busted

**4th Place: Cook County Chronicle**, Chicago, Kevin Beese.

### SPORTS SECTION

#### Division Daily

**1st Place: Daily Chronicle**, DeKalb, Edward Carifio. Daily Chronicle sports: "Good local coverage of prep sports, with plenty of photos to support the writing."

**2nd Place: The Dispatch • The Rock Island Argus**, Moline, David Selvig. David Selvig: "Good variety, plenty of photos, and local content."

**3rd Place: Daily Herald Media Group**, Orrin Schwarz & Staff. Daily

Herald Sports Section

**4th Place: Journal Star**, Peoria, Staff. Peoria Journal Star sports section

#### Division NonDaily

**1st Place: Ford County Chronicle**, Paxton, Andrew Rosten. Sports sections for Oct. 16, 2024 and Oct. 9, 2024: "Great use of art and well-rounded coverage of a wide range of sports and individual athletes throughout the area. Nice mix of high school and college."

**2nd Place: The Hinsdalean**, Staff. Sports section: "Nice use of art, cool sections, headshots"

**3rd Place: The County Chronicle**, Tuscola, Staff. The County Chronicle Sports: "Well organized, great use of photos and text. Good use of game stories with stories across various sports."

**4th Place: The Amboy News**, Brandon LaChance & Kip Cheek. Amboy Clippers win state championship section: "Nice coverage of the state championship team, with features on coaches and team support personnel."

### SPECIAL SECTIONS

#### Division A

**1st Place: Forest Park Review**, Staff. Forest Park 2024 Community Guide: "I really liked the advertising tied in, along with the graphics. I especially liked the drink choices on the dining out section that I assume you guys chose. It was a neat way to have your own voice in the community guide."

**2nd Place: The Amboy News**, Brandon LaChance. Amboy Depot Days

#### Division B

**1st Place: Riverside-Brookfield Landmark**, Staff. Riverside-Brookfield Landmark Answer Book 2024: "Simple and easy-to-ready layout. Good mix of content and advertisers."

**2nd Place: The Leader-Union**, Vandalia, Tony Angeloni, Susie Pontious & Lovetta Lockart. Veterans Day- Honoring All Who Served

**3rd Place: The Leader-Union**, Vandalia, Susie Pontious. Cancer Awareness

**4th Place: The Leader-Union**, Vandalia, Tony Angeloni, Susie Pontious & Lovetta Lockart. October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

#### Division C

**1st Place: Wednesday Journal of Oak Park & River Forest**, Staff. EATS 2024: "This entry hit a home run with interesting, staff-written content, an eye-catching layout, and a comprehensive look at the local dining scene. This special section utilizes excellent design, such as in the 'A Small Bite from Chefs' and 'Cool Treat' features, that elevates the reading experience and makes turning the page a visual treat. From locals to tourists, this special section would prove to be a handy guide. It includes broad strokes of the restaurant scene, like the list of restaurants that can be used as a resource, but also zooms in on interesting elements like profiles of chefs, a look



**SPORTS PHOTO - PORTRAIT/PERSONALITY** Division E 1st Place: The Dispatch • The Rock Island Argus, Moline, Roy Dabner



**ONLINE PHOTO SERIES/GALLERY** Division Daily 1st Place: The Dispatch • The Rock Island Argus, Moline, Katelyn Metzger



**ONLINE PHOTO SERIES/GALLERY** Division NonDaily 1st Place: The Hinsdalean, Jim Slonoff

at the rise in bakeries, and features on noteworthy happenings at local restaurants. The advertisements complement the theme of the publication, with a big nod going to the food pantry ad, which is an out-of-the-box but appropriate addition. It's a diverse and dynamic look at the local restaurant scene with creative twists on content and design. Bravo!"

**2nd Place: Wednesday Journal of Oak Park & River Forest**, Staff. Growing Green 2024

**3rd Place: Austin Weekly News**, Chicago, Susan McKelvey. West Side Magazine 2024

#### Division D

**1st Place: Herald-Whig**, Quincy, Deborah Gertz Husar. Fall 2024 Farm and Field: "Lots of local personality and style."

**2nd Place: Herald-Whig**, Quincy, Staff. 20 Under 40

**3rd Place: Breeze-Courier**, Taylorville, Elyse Clayton. County Fair

**4th Place: Herald-Whig**, Quincy, Staff. 2024 Answer Book

#### Division E

**1st Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Staff. Central Illinois Business: Forty Under 40 2024: "Best execution of the special section in the group. Nothing spectacular, but thorough."

**2nd Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Jeff D'Alessio, Niko Dugan & Joel Leizer. Stadium Stories: 100th Anniversary of Memorial Stadium: "Best of the three the paper entered. Good idea."

**3rd Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Jeff D'Alessio & Joel Leizer. Meeting Minutes & More: The Money Edition: "Interesting idea."

**4th Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Jeff D'Alessio & Niko Dugan. A Woman's Worth: Women's History Month

#### Division F

**1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times**, Miriam Di Nunzio, Bryan Barker & Eric White. Taste: Chefs' holiday dish list' section

### BEST WEBSITE

#### Division Daily

**1st Place: The Dispatch • The Rock Island Argus**, Moline, Staff. Dispatch-Argus website: "Of all entries, this was the one website that did not fall in a 'cookie cutter' style layout. I really enjoyed the various digital style formats to view content. I felt this site was more engaging using large photo galleries, live blogs and voice over intros. They have used most of today's available technology in conjunction with the newspaper."

**2nd Place: Belleville News-Democrat**, Staff.

**3rd Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Staff.

#### Division NonDaily

**1st Place: Wednesday Journal of Oak Park & River Forest**, Stacy Coleman.

Oakpark.com: "A vibrant, well-designed website that puts reader engagement as its top goal. The website is easy to navigate with menus that guide readers to topics of interest. Highlights of this website include its thoughtful breaking down of content into specific (yet balanced and not overly specific) categories, its consideration of its readers' needs with features like a list of local locations where they can find the physical newspaper and the Pitch Us A Story submission form. The Ask Us Anything tab also stands out as an engagement tool. It is easy to see how this website truly serves its community by not only hosting stories from its parent print paper, but gains a life of its own with its own content. This website truly goes beyond what is normally seen on newspaper websites!"

**2nd Place: Riverside-Brookfield Landmark**, Stacy Coleman. RBLandmark.com

**3rd Place: The Galena Gazette**, Staff. 4th Place: Republic-Times, Waterloo, Scott Woodsmall & Corey Saathoff.

### PUBLIC NOTICE JOURNALISM AWARD

#### Division All

**1st Place: Republic-Times**, Waterloo, Andrew Unverferth. Waterloo seeks tall tax levy

### Robert M. Cole Award for BEST SCHOOL BOARD COVERAGE

#### Division Daily

**1st Place: The Edwardsville Intelligencer**, Billy Woods. Billy Woods school board coverage: "Coverage was focused on school board policy and procedure, not just on board action. Explanations were well-detailed."

**2nd Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Jeff D'Alessio.

**3rd Place: The Telegraph**, Alton, Erik Hall & Jill Moon. Investigating the Bethalto School District

**4th Place: Daily Herald Media Group**, Russell Lissau & Christopher Placek. School District's Antisemitism Controversy

#### Division NonDaily

**1st Place: The Prairie Press**, Paris, Robby Tucker. Paris Union School District 95 Coverage: "Comprehensive coverage of the actions of a board of education in response to a financial crisis. Excellent at both reporting and explaining and enterprise in staying with the story."

**2nd Place: Kendall County Record**, Yorkville, David Petesch. Yorkville High School students fighting to wear pins at graduation in honor of classmate's passing: "A thoughtful, well-written piece highlighting the board's work on a sensitive issue in the community."

**3rd Place: The County Chronicle**, Tuscola, David Porter. Arcola school board: "Thorough coverage of board meetings and community input."

**4th Place: Ford County Chronicle**, Paxton, Will Brumleve. Paxton-Buckley-Loda school board: "Consistent coverage on important issues and trends."

### Maurice Scott Award for BEST COVERAGE OF TAXATION

#### Division Daily

**1st Place: Chicago Tribune**, Chicago Tribune & Illinois Answers Staff. Cook County assessor misclassifies hundreds of properties: "In-depth reporting shows real-world effects on readers and has clear public service elements. Graphic elements including the interactive map show relevant information clearly. A good job explaining what's happened, how it's affecting property owners, and how things have improved so far, while making it plain that there's still more improvement needed."

**2nd Place: Belleville News-Democrat**, Lexi Cortes, Mike Koziatek & Kelly Smits. TIFs, tax breaks and your property taxes

**3rd Place: Chicago Sun-Times**, Tim Novak, Stephanie Zimmermann & Frank Main. "Investigating Cook County property assessment errors"

**4th Place: The News-Gazette**, Champaign, Dave Hinton.

#### Division NonDaily

**1st Place: The Hinsdalean**, Pamela Lannom & Ken Knutson. Taxation coverage: "As someone not living in Illinois, I still was able to understand the nuances of local taxation in the state because of the quality of the writing. I appreciate the graphics that were included with some articles. These are greatly beneficial to visual learners. The glossary of terms and overview of each taxing entity prior to tax time is also something that I am sure was greatly appreciated by your readers."

**2nd Place: Ford County Chronicle**, Paxton, Will Brumleve. Taxes for Ford County public schools: "well-written articles, all of which provide the voters the information they needed to grasp the scope of the projects being sought"

**3rd Place: The Journal-News**, Hill-sboro, Mary (Galer) Herschelman. Wooded Acreage Assessment

**4th Place: The Prairie Press**, Paris, Robby Tucker. Soaring property sale prices could affect taxes

### BEST INVESTIGATIVE/ ENTERPRISE REPORTING

#### Division A

**1st Place: Ford County Chronicle**, Paxton, Will Brumleve. Ford County OMA/FOIA news: "Good enterprise reporting."

**2nd Place: Rockton-Roscoe News**, Michael McGinnis. Chemtool Disaster

#### Division B

**1st Place: The Dispatch • The Rock**

**Island Argus**, Moline, Tom Loewy, Thomas Geyer & Anthony Watt. The Last Rung - A Dispatch- Argus series of how people survive in the margins.: "This is great. This has plenty of detailed information, but it's more than a just a report. This series tells a story with effective storytelling techniques, interviewing people who are frequently unwilling to speak to a journalist."

**2nd Place: Belleville News-Democrat**, Lexi Cortes & Teri Maddox. Out-of-state owner upset that Belleville tore down building and may demolish a second: "This was a very well-researched series of articles, although the research gets a little tedious to read sometimes and could have been presented as a series of bullet points instead."

**3rd Place: Belleville News-Democrat**, Lexi Cortes. Nonprofit neglected Metro-east apartments, city and tenants say. They live with mold, pests: "Good supporting details were mentioned, and a lot of work was put into this."

**4th Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign**, Jeff D'Alessio. Rebecca Ramey vs. Champaign school district

#### Division C

**1st Place: Chicago Tribune**, Staff. Culture of Corruption: "A deeply reported, comprehensive look into a seemingly intractable problem. "While reading, one can only shake their head and say "wow," multiple times per story.

"The number of scandals, and the institutional rot which allows them to continue, boggles the mind. The series deftly lays out how a self-interested political culture, minimal regulation, entrenched state and local power, and an overly decentralized system of governments combine to enable crookery.

"In some sections of some entries, the stories can start to drag and read like a simple history of scandals. But the writing remains engaging, and these episodes are woven together to illustrate the broader thesis.

"The art, especially archival photos, is strong. Stories could have benefited from charts and data illustration.

"I especially enjoyed the piece about potential solutions. After such a long list of failures, it was refreshing to see remedies proposed.

"The dishonor roll is also a nice reference for people to have, and a great visual to illustrate the sheer number of officials implicated."

**2nd Place: Chicago Tribune**, Lisa Schencker & Emily Hoerner. Medical Misconduct

**3rd Place: Chicago Tribune**, Lizzie Kane & Talia Soglin. Verbal abuse, a 'sex-driven' culture: Ex-employees describe toxic environment at Guaranteed Rate

**4th Place: Chicago Sun-Times**, Staff. "The invisible toll of opioid overdoses on a generation of Black men in America"

# Illinois Press Association's 2024 Sweepstakes Winners

## David B. Kramer Memorial Trophy

Forest Park Review  
2nd Place: El Paso Journal  
3rd Place: DuPage County Chronicle, Wheaton  
4th Place: The Lexingtonian

The David B. Kramer Memorial Trophy was established in 2014 by the Kramer family in memory of the late publisher of the Gibson City Courier and the other Kramer weekly newspapers. It is awarded to a Division A weekly newspaper.

## Harold and Eva White Memorial Trophy

The Commercial-News, Danville  
2nd Place: Community News Brief, Macomb  
3rd Place: Riverside-Brookfield Landmark  
4th Place: The Mendota Reporter

The Harold and Eva White Trophy is awarded to a Division B weekly newspaper. It was established in 1990 and contributed by SUN Publications, a division of Copley Newspapers, in honor of Harold and Eva White, former publisher of SUN Publications in Naperville.

## Will Loomis Memorial Trophy

Ford County Chronicle, Paxton  
2nd Place: The Hinsdalean  
3rd Place: The Prairie Press, Paris  
4th Place: Wednesday Journal of Oak Park & River Forest

The Will Loomis Memorial Trophy is awarded to a Division C weekly newspaper. The Cook County Suburban Publishers Association established it in 1949 in memory of William W. Loomis, former publisher of the LaGrange Citizen.

## Patrick Coburn Award of Excellence

The Telegraph, Alton  
2nd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb  
3rd Place: Herald & Review, Decatur  
4th Place: Breeze-Courier, Taylorville

The Patrick Coburn Award of Excellence is awarded to a Division D daily newspaper. It was established in 2011 and contributed by Patrick Coburn, former publisher of the State Journal-Register and vice president of Copley Press, Inc.

## Mabel S. Shaw Memorial Trophy

The News-Gazette, Champaign  
2nd Place: The Dispatch · The Rock Island Argus, Moline  
3rd Place: Belleville News-Democrat  
4th Place: The Pantagraph, Bloomington

The Mabel S. Shaw Memorial Trophy is awarded to a Division E daily newspaper. It was established in 1994 and contributed by the Shaw family in memory of the late publisher of The Telegraph in Dixon.

## Stuart R. Paddock Memorial Trophy

Chicago Tribune  
2nd Place: Daily Herald Media Group  
3rd Place: Chicago Sun-Times

The Stuart R. Paddock Memorial Trophy is awarded to a Division F daily newspaper. It was established in 1978 and contributed by the Paddock family in memory of the late publisher of the Chicago newspaper company.





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