

CLASS 01 - GENERAL EXCELLENCE

Division A

1st Place: Winnebago Chronicle, Rockford, Jack McCarthy. Winnebago Chronicle General Excellence. "Lots of great photos. I really like the layout of both editions. This is a good looking community newspaper."

2nd Place: Mahomet Citizen, Fred Kroner and staff. Mahomet Citizen. "Loads of great local faces here. I like 10-Question Friday. I enjoyed the opinion pieces, especially 'A kid's perspective.'"

3rd Place: Forest Park Review, Staff. Forest Park Review General Excellence. "Great layout. Lots of good images. Interesting front page picture choices! I especially liked the pig, but the old man was a cute pick too. Good story variety."

Honorable Mention: El Paso Journal, Staff. General Excellence: May 17 and Sept. 13. "Very engaging front page designs drew me right in. Headlines for full-page width photos are a little uninspired."

Division B

1st Place: Republic-Times, Waterloo, Staff. General Excellence - Republic-Times. "Excellent newspaper. Loved the layout and design. Filled with news and events community members want to see. Well done!"

2nd Place: The Galena Gazette, Staff. General excellence.

3rd Place: Riverside-Brookfield Landmark, Bob Uphues. Sept. 13, 2017 and Oct. 4, 2017.

Honorable Mention: Mason County Democrat, Havana, Staff. General Excellence.

Division C

1st Place: Suburban Life Core Group, Staff. Suburban Life Core Group. "Lots of local news, good variety of content. Edi page is minimal. Photos good, design and advertising are well done."

2nd Place: Kane County Chronicle, St. Charles, Staff. Kane County Chronicle . "Lots of local news, some canned content. Edi page is good. Photos range from good sports to bland. Advertising and layout good."

3rd Place: The MidWeek, DeKalb, Staff. MidWeek 091317. "Writing is excellent, although minimal. Ad design also very good, as is use of typography. No edi page at all. Lot of submitted content."

Division D

1st Place: Journal Gazette & Times-Courier, Mattoon, Staff. General Excellence. "Strong local photos and coverage of the community. It was a pleasure to read through these pages."

2nd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Staff. Daily Chronicle. "Very good local stories and photos. Good and inviting page design."

3rd Place: Chicago Daily Law Bulletin, Staff. Chicago Daily Law Bulletin - General Excellence. "Very clean layout and design. Easy to navigate."

Honorable Mention: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Staff. The Register-Mail General Excellence. "Clean design of the paper. I liked the sports coverage."

Division E

1st Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Staff. The News-Gazette. "Sunday sample much better than the weekday. The typographical circus (ugh!) takes away from solid content on the Thursday entry; 'Keeping Watch' on the \$1.6 million question is engaging as are related page 3 stories -- good job! Nice to see opinion pages get such space; good lead piece by Jim Dye; editorial on budget a tough sell but nicely written. Sports -- great creative ways to attract interest and point online with Catch 'em If You Can and Junior Reporters. Excellent presentation on 'Shot Maker' ...and good DII look at Coach Figueroa. Local Section seems strong; good things to say about On the Go; Travel with local focus helps set this entry apart. Entertainment section shows staff initiative... and 'Mini' is a fun read that works."

2nd Place: Rockford Register Star, Staff. Rockford Register Star. "Nice to see an entry where sports is not necessarily the best section in the newspaper -- although sports done well, too. Overall good, solid presentation. Nice balance of local mix with wire service news. Very good use of color throughout. Advertising with effective punch. News focus on race, backed by opinion piece, nicely done. Looking over my notes, whatever I might comment negatively seems unimportant to an overall solid, well-organized newspaper. Good job."

3rd Place: The Daily Journal, Kankakee, Staff. General Excellence from The Daily Journal, Kankakee. "Nice to see news actually dominate front page of a newspaper (although cemetery photo with 'Heat Stress' seems weak). Good to see local features and the local faces in 'Milestones' and 'Local Faces' photos helps offset newswire data. Outdoors section solid. Overall layout clean."

Honorable Mention: Quincy Herald-Whig, Staff. Quincy Herald-Whig. "Front pages are inviting! Good job on 'Homeless' and 'Sign School' and 'Taxes.' Local news showcases staff effort (just wanting more). Likewise, wanting more opinion: Clear statement on Keeping Conover; really like the concise summary of Herald-Whig View. This effort leaves me wanting more (than just a page or 2 on Sunday). Ads generally well done -- Photos in Botox Party make for great impact; house ad on baseball ticket contest (and other house ads) well done. Amish cook column a winner; also good to feature local Quincy woman with recipes. Wide variety in coverage obvious, so maybe a little more organization is in order. 'People and Professions' one of the better Business sections entered in this year's contest. Would like the Business Notebook to get better prominence. Nice to see Agriculture get some play. Liked the concise delivery of lots of info in Out and About. Why not treat your classified text to a larger font size (and keep your headings small)?"

Division F

1st Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Staff. The Daily Herald. "Good use of infographics throughout both issues. Lots of local art but I would like to see more faces, as well as see them more clearly. Lots of great sports action shots."

2nd Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Staff. Chicago Sun-Times general excellence — 2 full editions. "Great front pages. Particularly like the front page promo regarding the state budget. Lots of story variety throughout. So many good face shots in both issues. Photo reproduction is stellar. Fantastic use of color throughout."

3rd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Dennis Anderson. Journal Star, Peoria General Excellence. "Great layout throughout. Would like to see more local faces throughout the paper. Front page graphic is great and very informative, but altogether very impersonal front pages. Good variety of opinion on editorial pages."

Honorable Mention: Belleville News-Democrat, Staff. BND General excellence. "Good front pages and lots of story variety. Page design looks good, but story layout leaves something to be desired with loads of white space at the end that contributes nothing to the layout. Would like to see more use of graphics, subheads, etc."

CLASS 02 - COMMUNITY SERVICE

Division A

1st Place: Hancock County Journal-Pilot, Carthage, Emma VanArsdale. W.O.W. Park. "This community service project far exceeds what it means to serve the community you work in. Great job."

2nd Place: The Lexingtonian, Laurie Sleeter, Jan Heuer. ‘The Fort’ gains membership and promotes Lexington history. "This pulls together history and community for the good of the whole. Great coverage of the entire process."

3rd Place: El Paso Journal, Cara Howard. History fades, help set in stone. "Small town hospitality is right. Great story."

Honorable Mention: The Free Press Advocate, Wilmington, Staff. It pays to get pulled over - Operation Secret Santa. "Very heartwarming, and great coverage."

Division B

1st Place: Pike Press, Pittsfield, Staff. Honor Flight.

2nd Place: Bureau County Republican, Princeton, Staff. BCR, Community Service, Voters Forum.

3rd Place: The Galena Gazette, Hillary Dickerson, Carter Newton. Coming to Galena: Stories of Immigration.

Honorable Mention: The News Leader, Highland, Megan Braa. Highland rallies to find bone marrow match for local businessman.

Division D

1st Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Christopher Heimerman. Daily Chronicle – Annie Glidden North Mental Illness Campaign.

2nd Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Tom Loewy, Rebecca Susmarski. Lead Exposed.

3rd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Christopher Heimerman. Daily Chronicle – Property Tax Explainer.

Honorable Mention: The Daily Ledger, Canton, Deb Robinson. Fight crime-invest in kids.

Division E

1st Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Staff. How safe are area roads? "Really strong analytical pieces that don't stint on the emotion and vision, putting the reader in the moment at the same time they deliver the facts. Excellent work."

2nd Place: The State Journal-Register, Springfield, Kate Schott, Angie Muhs. Sounding the Alarm / "Unacceptable." "Excellent in-depth explainer and a series on an important issue that would literally have an impact on every reader."

3rd Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Staff. Neighborhood watch. "These stories could be easily dismissed as small. They are, however, an excellent example of why small stories matter. The "cupcake law" piece is a great testimony to why rules have to be considered not only in the context of what they are preventing, but what they are limiting."

Honorable Mention: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Jordan Wilson. Crystal Lake flooding. "The art really helps capture the total impact of the flooding and builds on the writing. The evolution of the story over the course of less than a month was intriguing."

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Rick Telander, Frank Main, Sam Charles, Jon Seidel, Michael O'Brien, Mary Mitchell, Mick Dumke. 'Guns in Chicago'

2nd Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Staff. Straight from the Source.

3rd Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Marni Pyke. Perilous Paths.

Honorable Mention: Journal Star, Peoria, Phil Luciano. Binkley's Legacy Continues.

CLASS 03 - LOCAL EDITORIAL

Division A

1st Place: Shelbyville Daily Union, Jeff Long. Doctors should be open to medical pot. "This editorial clearly addresses a timely and important issue and an aspect of it that many readers might not have considered -- that laws approving medicinal marijuana use can be only as effective as their application by medical professionals. It further emphasizes the urgency of the situation by posing the drug's potential to help alleviate the opioid addiction crisis. It uses quotes of knowledgeable parties to great effect, and the writer is not afraid to take on a powerful professional interest. Overall, the piece is a persuasive argument for professionals to step up for patients."

2nd Place: Hancock County Journal-Pilot, Carthage, Emma VanArsdale. Enjoy the trip of a lifetime. "The column is an effective response to uninformed, knee-jerk condemnations of valuable civics education. And it illustrates that good journalism can be rooted in personal experience."

3rd Place: The Navigator & Journal-Register, Albion, T.J. Hug. Enough is enough! "Exposing a lack of transparency in government is a fundamental duty of journalism and this column does so even while generously offering the perpetrators the benefit of the doubt. Without such scrutiny, much more public business would be conducted in secret."

Division B

1st Place: The Hinsdalean, Pamela Lannom. Help wanted once again in D181.

2nd Place: Metropolis Planet, Areia Hathcock & Michele Longworth. The Suicide Stigma.

3rd Place: Pike Press, Pittsfield, Julie Boren. What statues can still say to us.

Honorable Mention: The Journal-News, Hillsboro, John M. Galer. Slow Mail Costs Money.

Division D

1st Place: Journal Gazette & Times-Courier, Mattoon, Penny Weaver. Get the (expletive) budget done. "When I read your editorial, it made me want to stand and cheer because it's everything a good newspaper editorial should be. It checked all the boxes."

2nd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Eric Olson. Corruption charges are maddening. "Well-written. Hard hitting. Factual. A great editorial. Excellent work."

3rd Place: The Daily Ledger, Canton, Deb Robinson. #MeToo. "A candid piece that every married person needs to read. Your personal writing style really brought the points home to readers. And the writer is to be commended for her bravery for telling her story."

Honorable Mention: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Tom Martin. Quality of life can grown economy. "Good editorials educate readers about community issues. This one hits the mark."

Division E

1st Place: The Southern Illinoisan, Carbondale, The Southern Editorial Board. Cairo editorials. "A great, informative, well-reasoned thread of editorials that guide through the issue thoughtfully."

2nd Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Eric Olson. Withholding info a dangerous precedent. "No one involved in a crime, whether victim or perpetrator, wants to be identified with it. This editorial makes a compelling case for why sometimes the public interest is more important than a victim's desire for privacy."

3rd Place: Rockford Register Star, Wally Haas. The fight against human trafficking. "Critically important information and opinion on a (gasp) 'not here!' issue."

Honorable Mention: The Herald-News, Joliet, Jon Styf. Prison. "This was an editorial rich in facts, but in places I wanted to argue with it, and looked up answers on my own. That's exactly the kind of response an editorial ought to elicit. It isn't a substitution of opinion. It's a prompt to develop your own."

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Tom McNamee, Tom Frisbie & Marlen Garcia. Time and again, we failed to rescue Gizzell,' Chicago Sun-Times editorial board. "This is a beautifully crafted piece of writing reminding us that children in difficult circumstances are not the responsibility of a faceless, overburdened bureaucracy, but of the society. It goes beyond the typical call for reform, oversight, funding and so on, to the heart of the matter -- that a child's life always hangs in the balance. An effective call to humanity rather than to Springfield."

2nd Place: Belleville News-Democrat, Brad Weisenstein. Does poor town's mayor live in \$6K house or \$221K house 12 miles away? "The mayor teed it up and this editorial didn't waste the opportunity to hit it long and straight. It combines elements of solid journalism and good writing, achieving just the right tone to hold his honor to task."

3rd Place: Belleville News-Democrat, Brad Weisenstein. Sen. Clayborne redefined public service as public serving him. "Humor probably is the sharpest of all arrows in the editorialist's quiver, especially when dealing with august personages who probably don't share the writer's sense of humor. This editorial deftly uses the device to great effect, making the point that the nature of public service is not necessarily public service."

Honorable Mention: Chicago Sun-Times, Tom McNamee, Tom Frisbie, Marlen Garcia. Old factory in Bridgeport reveals how Chicago works,' Chicago Sun-Times editorial board. "This editorial is a strong example of writing with authority. It reveals the writer's command of the subject, and is woven with relevant details about the players' relationships to create a highly convincing argument about the conduct of public business in not just the public interest."

CLASS 04 - EDITORIAL PAGE

Division A

1st Place: Mahomet Citizen, Fred Kroner, George Dobrik. Mahomet Citizen. "These pages dial on the life of the local community but are not afraid to weigh on major national events with well-written and well-reasoned commentary. The paper clearly strives to make itself accessible to a broad range of readers."

2nd Place: Ford County Record, Paxton, Staff. Ford County Record editorial page.

Division B

1st Place: Wednesday Journal of Oak Park & River Forest, Ken Trainor. Editorial Pages, April 12 and Oct. 25. "The section covers a lot of interesting topics and includes a lot of community voices. Well-done and reflects a commitment by this newspaper to be a big part of the community dialogue on issues."

2nd Place: The Galena Gazette, Carter Newton, Hillary Dickerson. Editorial pages. "I like the work done to wrap the immigration series and to include many voices in reaction to it. Some other good features included as well. I don't like jumping the letters all over the place. Makes that hard to follow. Should find another way to present that."

3rd Place: Oswego Ledger, Staff. Editorial pages from April 13, June 29. "Clean layout and good content with a lot of letters, local editorial and the reflections column."

Honorable Mention: Bureau County Republican, Princeton, The late Terri Simon (1958-2017). Editorial pages, 8 and 9, from April 15 and May 13. "Editorials are well done. Not certain about man on the street portion, either because of its dominant layout or the questions or whether the concept is dated."

Division D

1st Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Tom Martin. Editorial Page. "These pages focus on matters crucial to the local community without forgetting the broader world. Content is clearly labeled so that readers know exactly what they're reading, and the pages are easy to navigate. Columns and editorials are generally well-written and well-edited. The pages also go the extra mile in telling readers who to call with questions and comments. Readers appreciate that accessibility and the opportunity to be heard."

2nd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Staff. Opinions. "These pages clearly provide a forum not only for the paper's strong editorial voice but for the community. Content is varied by subject and perspective, and the selected cartoons illustrate a commitment to not letting one side dominate the conversation. Overall, well-balanced and well-presented."

Division E

1st Place: Rockford Register Star, Wally Haas. Rockford Register Star editorial Pages.

2nd Place: The Daily Journal, Kankakee, Kiera Allen. Grandpa's diagnosis: Going from hopeless to hopeful.

3rd Place: The Southern Illinoisan, Carbondale, The Southern Editorial Board. The Southern Illinoisan - Editorial Page.

Division F

1st Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Jim Slusher. Daily Herald Opinion Page.

2nd Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Tom McNamee, Tom Frisbie & Marlen Garcia. 2 samples of the Chicago Sun-Times' editorial page / Op-Ed pages.

3rd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Mike Bailey. Editorial pages, Journal Star, Peoria.

Honorable Mention: The Dispatch & The Rock Island Argus, Kenda Burrows. Viewpoints.

CLASS 05 - NEWS REPORTING - SINGLE STORY

Division A

1st Place: Oakland Independent, Janice Hunt. President, superintendent admit violating Open Meetings Act. "As far as news reporting goes, this is good investigation and important to the community."

2nd Place: Ford County Record, Paxton, Will Brumleve. Elderly man beaten at bar. "It's a sad story to tell but an important one."

3rd Place: Du Quoin Call, Geoffrey Ritter. Tornado marks end of an era at Elkhart's Powerade Park. "Unfortunately, natural disasters force reporters to be timely. Good story."

Honorable Mention: Piatt County Journal-Republican, Monticello, Steve Hoffman. Teacher shortage hitting Piatt County. "This is an important story for the community. Good job."

Division B

1st Place: Oswego Ledger, Tony Scott. Crash still resonates. "A properly sensitive telling of a terrible tragedy. The tone of the piece perfectly captured the emotional nature of the subject matter and drew the reader in, making them empathize with the family. Also, the program tie in was a nice informational piece that encapsulates the current news surrounding the event."

2nd Place: The Galena Gazette, Hillary Dickerson. Women's March. "Very well organized. Having input from people in various cities rounded out the piece nicely. The photos chosen were a perfect compliment to the body copy."

3rd Place: Riverside-Brookfield Landmark, Bob Uphues. Brookfield gas stations duke it out, again, at the pump. "Lighthearted take on an interesting news moment in the community. Well written and appropriately toned."

Honorable Mention: Mason County Democrat, Havana, Wendy Martin. Most of the 4th of July fireworks were on Facebook. "The lead makes this piece. Kudos on concise and perfectly apt description of events."

Division C

1st Place: Austin Weekly News, Chicago, Timothy Inklebarger. On the frontlines of the opioid crisis. "This goes beyond officials talking about the drug crises. It explores life among the users. Good color, great quotes."

2nd Place: Kane County Chronicle, St. Charles, Brenda Schory. Community reacts after St. Charles murder/suicide. "This story gives a glimpse into the victims. Good job."

3rd Place: Austin Weekly News, Chicago, Michael Romain. Justice Department -- CPD violates Constitution. "A lot of research. Good job."

Honorable Mention: Valley Life, Sandwich, Katrina J.E. Milton. Earlville standoff. "Good narrative, documenting all the story twists."

Division D

1st Place: Pekin Daily Times, Michael Smothers. Meth addicts last 'after' shot — at peace. "Absolutely amazing. I read it with tears in my eyes. Very nice work, a true tribute to the woman and her hard work in restarting her life. A clear winner."

2nd Place: Pekin Daily Times, Michael Smothers. Pekin firefighters deliver family miracle. "A deep and meaningful piece. Reporter did a nice job connecting the dots to the puzzle, and bringing the emotion out of the people involved."

3rd Place: The Commercial-News, Danville, Brianna Kirkham. Using and abusing. "This story humanizes the problem, rather than reports stats. Nice job."

Honorable Mention: Robinson Daily News, Bill Richardson. Legal process closed Kirkpatrick case, but it remains divisive for some. "Very interesting story, complete with overview and timeline of events. Well done."

Division E

1st Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Noelle McGee. Crossing examination. "Well executed enterprise reporting."

2nd Place: The Herald-News, Joliet, Brian Stanley. Sema'j Crosby. "Thorough well-sourced reporting."

3rd Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Jordyn Reiland. Bull Valley drug bust. "Solid reporting and information."

Honorable Mention: The Southern Illinoisan, Carbondale, K. Janis Esch. They're not going to scare us.' "Good use of interview skills."

Division F

1st Place: Belleville News-Democrat, Beth Hundsdorfer, George Pawlaczyk. Sometime in the Night. "Wow! I couldn't stop reading about these poor children and how an agency failed in its oversight to protect these nine children. These types of stories are very difficult to do because of child protection laws but that did not stop these reporters. The story tells the harrowing tale of this family, how they came to live in such filth and how the death of their infant unraveled it all. Heartbreaking story that is well-reported and well-written. Sidebars would have made this a little easier for readers because there is a lot to digest but overall an outstanding piece of journalism stemming from curiosity and dogged pursuit for answers."

2nd Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Katie Drews, Lauren FitzPatrick. One lapse after another at CPS school...' "Very well-done piece on an unfathomable tragedy. Very well-written and reported. Reporters dug deep to find out how this horrific drowning could happen."

3rd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Staff. Caterpillar Headquarters Leaving Peoria. "This is one of the most complete packages of stories about the widespread impact - from just about all angles - of a major employer's scrapped headquarters plans. Very well-planned and executed with easy-to-read stories, timeline, columns, QnA and more."

Honorable Mention: Chicago Sun-Times, Mick Dumke. 'How Chicago gets its guns,'

ProPublica Illinois / Chicago Sun-Times / WBEZ-FM. "Interesting read that is well-reported and well-written. The story is important, interesting and in-depth. Kudos!"

CLASS 06 - NEWS REPORTING - SERIES

Division A

1st Place: Peoria County Chronicle, Staff. Caterpillar. "Fully developed stories with multiple angles and techniques including pull quotes and timeline. Very nicely put together."

2nd Place: Tazewell Chronicle, East Peoria, Holly Eitenmiller. Robert Bee. "Excellent story telling, well written, tight."

3rd Place: The Braidwood Journal, Brent Sumner, Ann Gill. Interstate Eight Conference. "Great enterprise and continuity of coverage over several months. Excellent job."

Honorable Mention: Du Quoin Call, Geoff Ritter, Holly Kee, staff. God had his hands on us': the southern Illinois Fat Tuesday tornado. "Excellent reporting during an emergency situation."

Division B

1st Place: Riverside-Brookfield Landmark, Brett McNeil and Bob Uphues. Street paved with gold. "This was a tight competition among the three entries I liked the best. This story was the most enterprising and had a statewide impact. It also included impressive data that was presented to let readers form their own opinions."

2nd Place: Mason County Democrat, Havana, Wendy Martin. Deemie Development Proposal. "My three favorite entries all were worthy of winning, I believe, including this one. The reporting here (and in the related entry on Ron Hillis) shows what a community newspaper is supposed to do: Shed light and ask questions about how taxpayer resources are being used. I have some questions about where the first concerns for this development came from, as it sounds like there were some agendas among the public officials or candidates, but there was a lot of depth and detail about the people involved and their credentials."

3rd Place: The Regional News, Palos Heights, Anthony Caciopo, Dermot Connolly, Jeff Vorva. Hey, hey, ho, ho, Sharon Brannigan has to go': Protesters disrupt Palos Township meetings. "This was a difficult category with some very good entries covering a range of topics from different angles. Some were featurey, some analytical and some enterprise. The challenge for this package was to report essentially an ongoing news event over the course of several months. There are some questions I would have like to seen public officials address that seem a little odd to be left out: Why couldn't they ever find a larger venue? Did any other board members comment on Brannigan's comments? Had Brannigan consulted an attorney in the event the board did try to take action against her? Was there any affect on the township's ability to function? But the reporter captured the scenes of some significant meetings with good detail, bringing the reader to meetings that were contentious and interesting. It was done in a way that allowed voices on both sides of the matter to speak, reflecting the reactions to the trustee's opinion and right to express it. It looks like Brannigan did not say much after her statement to be able to spin into its own story, but it also looks like the reporter gave Brannigan those opportunities and eventually was able to get some comments."

Honorable Mention: The Galena Gazette, Hillary Dickerson, Carter Newton. Coming to Galena: Stories of Immigration. "This is a very nice package of stories. Well-presented and

shows the variety of backgrounds for the people featured. I think the question becomes whether this is the right category, because while immigration is a news issue, this collection of features being compared to enterprise reporting about government and public policy or ongoing news situations."

Division C

1st Place: Pioneer Press Media Group, Staff. Anxiety High. "First, kudos to Stacey Wescott on the photos. EXCELLENT to perfectly illustrate the stories. As a parent of three, this is one of the most comprehensive, emotional, informative series I have ever read, ever. Its progression is outstanding, from establishing to problem, explaining it from the impact on the kids from their personal view highlighted with stats that prove the points being made, and then offer some solutions being used throughout the system so that other schools can be informed. The writing is OUTSTANDING; the emotions are real and portrayed effectively. It has given voice to the frustrations that children are feeling but are not either understood by parents, or as the story points out, ignored by parents! Candidly, this series needs broader exposure. I would urge that it be submitted to USA TODAY or some other national publication for consideration. It's a message that absolutely needs to be out there to a much broader audience. Hats off to the writing and editing team. You deserve FIRST PLACE! P.S. I will be writing to get permission to reprint the final part of the series, which our audience of working families needs to hear."

2nd Place: Austin Weekly News, Chicago, Michael Romain, Tim Inklebarger . The anatomy of murder in broad daylight. "Michael is to be complimented on his personalized story telling, weaving into the factual accounts of a shooting the visceral reactions of neighbors, bystanders and citizens living in the area who are fearful, but resolved, every day. The sidebar use of "A brief history of violence" is an excellent overview of the problem that would have been lost had it been simply included in the story. In his funeral story, he captures the frustration of parents, relatives who tried to help this young man and the absolute helplessness they are facing in a community filled with senseless crime. His final story relates the community efforts of a small group to bring attention to the problems. What's missing is the next step: how is the community taking the issue 'upstairs' to the city's leadership to get help? This is a great start for a bigger campaign. Rallying on the streets alone won't solve the problem. Michael has given strong personal context to this issue. Hopefully he will now be reporting of the efforts, or lack thereof, of officials to 'do something.'"

3rd Place: Suburban Life Core Group, Mary Stroka. Ripper Crew parole. "Excellent first article that clearly outlined the background of this old case. The follow-up from a variety of sources involved in the case is excellent, touching the story from various angles. Mark Busch is to be complimented on his Aug. 25, 2017 photo showing both the brother and the victim in a most compelling manner. Since the story is so old, humanizing the victim so that readers have a feeling as to the heinous nature of the crime is an excellent piece of writing. However, it wasn't

until the Nov. 3 issue that we discovered why Kokoraleis wasn't executed. Until then, the reader didn't realize he didn't actually participate in the killing, but was an observer and an accomplice. This came as a surprise and should have been a part of the story much earlier. (A minor issue with the production staff: the Sept. 8 issue announcing Allred should have had Allred's thumbnail photo as well, after all, the lead is about her; the inside photo of brother holding the poem doesn't make sense since the title, 'A Thank You to A Friend' is strange compared to the crime. Had the poem been published as a sidebar to this story it would have made more sense.)"

Honorable Mention: Kane County Chronicle, St. Charles, Brenda Schory. Welcoming church deals with anti-gay activists. "Excellent coverage on a variety of fronts on the LGBT stories. Covers all sides of the issue effectively without showing a personal direction. The coverage of the Council meeting was very professional, giving adequate space to the opposition's position, as abhorrent as it is. Nice photography to illustrate the stories."

Division D

1st Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Robert Connelly. Heroin's Impact: "Everything is getting black." "With a category filled with worthy entries, this stood out. Strong reporting, photography. Very well done."

2nd Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Mitch Prentice. Flourishing Elsewhere: Why they left. "Wonderful job researching and explaining a topic that is going on in many markets."

3rd Place: Journal Gazette & Times-Courier, Mattoon, Staff. MHS school shooting. "Good job covering a tragedy that's happening way too often. Well-written."

Honorable Mention: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Eric Olson, Drew Zimmerman, Stephanie Markham. Daily Chronicle – Theriault Resignation Series. "Solid reporting and investigating to dig into the story."

Division E

1st Place: Rockford Register Star, Corina Curry. Race in the Rock River Valley. "This series is fantastic. It has great in-depth reporting along with graphics that provide either extra information or presents information in the story in an eye-catching way. It was an interesting idea to take a look at what the 1990s desegregation looks like today, and although the results are disappointing, you brought some really interesting information to the public."

2nd Place: Herald & Review, Decatur, Tom Lisi, Chris Lusvardi. Still standing. "This is a great example of taking a routine story just a step further and seeing where it can take you. I'm always a fan of looking through data to support a story like this, and you did it well. This is a problem in many cities, including the one I live in and report on, so it's really of interest to people beyond

that particular city. I also liked including the mayoral candidates and the Opinion page to look at this situation from all angles. The graphics of the buildings with the years on them was also a nice touch. Nice job."

3rd Place: The Southern Illinoisan, Carbondale, Molly Parker. Cairo public housing crisis. "This ongoing reporting was incredibly thorough, which is really impressive. One of my favorite pieces was the story about various community members and their role in the city, followed by the Christmas story. It put a real face on this situation while also giving an in-depth look at the city. On the graphics side, I liked the graph of the inspections data - it makes it very eye-opening what kind of conditions it developed into and when. And knowing that your work is hopefully sparking some change for the better is why most of us do this job."

Honorable Mention: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Staff. The disappearance of Yingying Zhang. "This story was covered from all angles - family interviews, photos from support marches, information from legal documents, interviews about campus safety, etc. It gives a well-rounded view of the situation, which was of large interest for many in the public. Kudos for landing some key pieces of information, such as the family interview and spotting the accused man in the photo."

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Rick Telander. A season under the gun.' "Wow. A good series needs to grab readers right off the bat, and this one certainly does. Insightful. Impactful. Inspiring. 'A Season Under the Gun' provides an insight into young lives in Chicago's violent neighborhoods. A powerful package. And it didn't hurt that the Orr boys won the state title!"

2nd Place: Belleville News-Democrat, Staff. Congressional shooting coverage. "The Bellville News-Democrat didn't ask for this. But man, when they got it, they ran with it. We can imagine the scene in the newsroom when staffers learned the shooter at a Congressional softball practice in Washington was a local guy. All hands on deck. The team coverage of this breaking story, mainly the in-depth details of the shooter and his background, was nothing short of spectacular. Follow-ups in subsequent days were equally as strong."

3rd Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Tim Novak. The breaks of the property-tax game.' "What a great example of investigative journalism. As judges, we were amazed, but not surprised, by the outrageous examples Tim Novak uncovered to show how the property tax system in Chicago is played to the benefit of a select few. We will never look at Wrigleyville with the same admiration."

Honorable Mention: Chicago Sun-Times, Dan Mihalopoulos, Frank Main, Mick Dumke. The Third Border.' "This series is an excellent, eye-opening look at the real-life struggles of the deportation debate. Young people forced to choose whether to stay in the U.S. and face

separation from deported parents. A woman with a lifesaving transplant hung up in immigration red tape. The human element is real, and the depth of reporting is exceptional. Well done."

CLASS 07 - GOVERNMENT BEAT REPORTING

Division A

1st Place: Ford County Record, Paxton, Will Brumleve, Ross Brown and Jean Noellsch. Gibson City Council. "Lots of details in the search for the email that influenced Council's decision. Easy to read -- the key to government reporting. Like that the reporter asked why it happened."

2nd Place: Ford County Record, Paxton, Will Brumleve. Paxton police chief fiasco. "Good research. Lots of detail. FOIA requests add to the story."

3rd Place: McLeansboro Times-Leader, Tesa Glass. Hamilton County Board finances. "Good job drilling through budget information."

Honorable Mention: Ford County Record, Paxton, Will Brumleve. Ford County Public Building Commission. "Small town politics in action. Good job capturing it."

Division B

1st Place: Mason County Democrat, Havana, Wendy Martin. Development agreement with Deemie. "Wendy Martin of the Mason County Democrat pursued a story about development-hungry Havana, Ill. being made big promises by an out-of-state entrepreneur--who was seeking a loan from China, and wanted the city to provide industrial park land valued at \$500,000 to get construction underway."

2nd Place: Mason County Democrat, Havana, Wendy Martin. Candidate questions CleanFlex. Who are they?

3rd Place: Mt. Vernon Register-News, Travis Morse. MVTHS. "Travis Morse of the Register-News thoroughly covered issues involving the new Mt. Vernon Township High School, including the departure of board members, administrators and staff."

Honorable Mention: The Enterprise, Plainfield, Staff. Marney Simon, The Enterprise, Plainfield. "Marney Simon provides readers with clear explanations of issues on the agenda of Plainfield government, ranging from election to roadwork."

Division C

1st Place: Suburban Life Core Group, Eric Schelkopf. Glen Ellyn School District 41 Board of Education coverage.

2nd Place: Jersey County Journal, Jerseyville, Rachel McGlasson. Grafton City Council.

Division D

1st Place: Pekin Daily Times, Michael Smothers. Government Beat in Tazewell County. "Police ticketing story was particularly engaging, combining great data with a lede that tickles interest."

2nd Place: Pekin Daily Times, Sharon Woods Harris. Pekin government beat reporting. "Good balance of engaging writing with important, informative stories."

3rd Place: Breeze-Courier, Taylorville, Owen Lasswell. Taylorville City Council coverage. "Engaging lede and important information in burn facility story make for a spoonful of sugar on an issue that people might otherwise glance over."

Honorable Mention: Chicago Daily Law Bulletin, Andrew Maloney. Statehouse and Supreme Court reports. "What journalist can resist a story where punctuation plays a starring role?"

Division E

1st Place: The Times, Ottawa, David Giuliani. Ousted Official. "What an astounding amount of work presented in interesting and well-written articles. I can imagine your readers excitement and anticipation when yet another story on this drama appeared in the paper. This is what community reporting is all about! Good job."

2nd Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Ed Komenda . Algonquin Township drama. "Great coverage of a dramatic issue with many stakeholders, not the least of which are taxpayers. Very well-written, balanced and interesting articles."

3rd Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Mary Schenk. Crime and courts. "These articles don't just report the story. They paint a picture that reaches a little deeper than normal into the reader's consciousness. Excellent, well-balanced reporting, too. Nice job!"

Honorable Mention: The State Journal-Register, Springfield, Crystal Thomas . City of Springfield beat. "Not only is Ms. Thomas a go-getter, she is a very good storyteller who produced fair and balanced articles on Springfield. She seems to inherently understand the fine art of government reporting. I expect to see big things from her in the future!"

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Tim Novak. The breaks of the property-tax game.'

2nd Place: Belleville News-Democrat, Beth Hundsdorfer, George Pawlaczyk. Duebbert coverage.

3rd Place: Belleville News-Democrat, Beth Hundsdorfer, George Pawlaczyk. Alvin Parks coverage.

Honorable Mention: Belleville News-Democrat, Lexi Cortes. Education coverage.

CLASS 08 - BUSINESS/ECONOMIC REPORTING

Division A

1st Place: Ford County Record, Paxton, Will Brumleve. Spirited Endeavor. "This story was interesting and touched on the issue of adding value to crops as a form of economic development for rural areas. The context on the hoops you go through to produce alcohol was of interest."

2nd Place: Cass County Star-Gazette, Beardstown, Sandy Haschemeyer. Falcon Protein Operations Underway. "An interesting story about an unusual manufacturing operation. The environmental aspects, from the Asian carp to the efforts to reduce waste, provided good context."

3rd Place: Ford County Record, Paxton, Will Brumleve. Paxton economic development. "Good coverage of what leaders are doing to bring development to the community. The first story, about the assessments, needed some sort of voice for the county assessor's office, even if it was a no comment."

Honorable Mention: Ford County Record, Paxton, Will Brumleve. Railside Golf Course. "Strong coverage on the future of a facility that played a big role in the community. The last story got a tad pie-in-the-sky cheerleader with descriptions of what was planned, but otherwise, good work."

Division B

1st Place: Riverside-Brookfield Landmark, Bob Uphues. Brookfield gas stations duke it out , again, at the pump. "The kind of (business) story that you can't stop reading."

2nd Place: Oswego Ledger, John Etheredge, Tony Scott, Erika Wurst. Caterpillar to shutdown manufacturing operations at Kendall Co. plant. "Good set of stories explains the situation of Cat's closing (though I would have like a little more data on why it does not have a larger tax impact) and tells the personal stories of displaced workers."

3rd Place: The Galena Gazette, Dan Burke. Foundations of Galena. "Story nicely intertwines the business and family with the community involvement over the years."

Honorable Mention: Bureau County Republican, Princeton, Goldie Rapp. Summit looks at economy. "Pretty good story covers what seems to be universal truths in the Midwest of manufacturers not being able to find workers."

Division C

1st Place: Kane County Chronicle, St. Charles, Stephanie N. Grimoldby. Shave and a haircut – Batavia barbershop offers ‘nerds’ a place to revel in culture. "Entertaining read on a cool barbershop. Very good take."

2nd Place: Kane County Chronicle, St. Charles, Renee Tomell. Surf's up – Restaurant Juliette serves fish, scallop, mussels, shrimp and more in Geneva. "Fresh story on a restaurant. Easy to read."

3rd Place: Austin Weekly News, Chicago, Igor Studenkov. Pop-up retail spaces coming to Austin. "Solid explainer on retail spaces coming to the community. Good reporting on the topic."

Honorable Mention: Austin Weekly News, Chicago, Igor Studenkov. Movie theater could open in North Lawndale this summer. "Good work on an entertainment option available to the community."

Division D

1st Place: The Commercial-News, Danville, Brendan Denison. Pork pulled apart. "A really well-structured trio of stories with good use of sources and experts to answer the multiple concerns of a sector of the agriculture business."

2nd Place: McDonough County Voice, Macomb, Jared DuBach. Winning Again. "This story gives a solid breakdown of the largest tax reform bill of this generation."

3rd Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Rebecca Susmarski. Revolving loan funds boost businesses. "A really novel idea that was explained well and with good use of sources. Even though it's a serious topic, the story was light, approachable and, most importantly, informative."

Honorable Mention: Effingham Daily News, Keith Stewart. Complicated trends for wheat. "A good look at an underreported topic."

Division E

1st Place: The Southern Illinoisan, Carbondale, Molly Parker, Isaac Smith. Center of Power: Cairo Public Utility Co. "A smart and thorough examination of an issue that affects every resident of the community. This is great public service journalism."

2nd Place: Sauk Valley Media, Sterling, Pam Eggemeier. Big money locally? You bet. "This is a unique look at the issue of local control, or lack of it, and how it is affecting community. This is the kind of story that informs with an eye toward making change."

3rd Place: The State Journal-Register, Springfield, Tim Landis. Economic development and business climate. "Strong reporting on a variety of issues. Especially enlightening was the story about the huge amounts owed to the state to local agencies."

Honorable Mention: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Julie Wurth, Marcus Jackson. Big business of college sports. "Stories about the cost of college sports are difficult to do, and this one succeeded admirably in informing the community about these costs and their impact."

Division F

1st Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Staff. Caterpillar Headquarters Leaving Peoria. "Excellent coverage of a stunning announcement that hit hard. You certainly captured the kick-in-the-gut emotions of Peoria. The breadth of coverage was impressive, from the q-and-a with the CEO to the impact on the suburbs and home markets to the familiar path to Chicago. Well done."

2nd Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Tim Novak. The breaks of the property-tax game.' "Fascinating reporting on the wheeling and dealing going on in Chicago to win a break on property taxes. Loved the Wrigley story. Just outrageous on its face. Good use of graphics and interactive map. J.B.'s mansion was another really good read. Ordinary property owners should be outraged."

3rd Place: Chicago Tribune Media Group, Chicago Tribune business staff. Caterpillar seeks new digs outside of Peoria. "Good coverage from the winning metro area's vantage point. This covered all the bases. And it provided good context on what probably was behind the decision."

Honorable Mention: Journal Star, Peoria, Thomas Bruch. Food Trucks Roll Out. "A thoroughly enjoyable story about the food truck business. I particularly liked how the story conveyed the brutal reality of trying to make a living from a food truck, and what the day to day experience is like. Excellent context on the fees that are keeping the food trucks out of downtown. Nicely done."

CLASS 09 - SPORTS NEWS

Division A

1st Place: Oakland Independent, Janice Hunt. State champs. "Now THAT'S big-time coverage. Excellent pictures and wrap-up, and packaging. Real nice work on breaking down the relay record."

2nd Place: Ford County Record, Paxton, Andrew Rosten. I will never forget this experience.' "I liked this. Almost seemed overdone with the size of the headline, but then reading on and understanding the gravity of the event and all the coverage and photos that followed, it all synthesized quite well. Good job."

3rd Place: The Harrisburg Register, Travis DeNeal, Michael Dann. "A Hawk goes to heaven." "Touching coverage and remembrance."

Honorable Mention: Ford County Record, Paxton, Andrew Rosten, Ryan Ferguson. Back-to-back. "My favorite? The art, particularly the team photo and the shot of an excited Eshleman. Good stuff."

Division B

1st Place: Effingham & Teutopolis News Report, Steve Raymond. BulldogNation_OldReporterThanks_HappyBirthday_PlanComes_BulldogsStateChampsClass9. "Excellent package. The breadth of the coverage matched the importance of the game."

2nd Place: Morris Herald-News, Rob Oesterle, Dick Goss. Morris state final. "Good package and mix of coverage, including photos. Sometimes you can get better coverage and emotion out of a loss, and this is an example of that."

3rd Place: The Reporter, Hickory Hills, Jeff Vorva. Queen in Pieces. "Package captured the enormity of the night and what's about to occur there."

Honorable Mention: Bureau County Republican, Princeton, Kevin Hieronymus. Swinford leaves lasting legacy. "Touching tribute to dead coach. I liked how they gathered sentiments off social media."

Division C

1st Place: Kane County Chronicle, St. Charles, Matt Le Cren. 'A DREAM COME TRUE.' "Sharp page. Good play of the art. I liked the agate as a separate component."

2nd Place: Kane County Chronicle, St. Charles, Kevin Druley. Durocher's stop seals dramatic win. "Real good story. Well-designed page."

3rd Place: Suburban Life Core Group, Joshua Welge. Air Alec: Pierce puts on receiving show. "Liked the use of art. Good story."

Honorable Mention: Kane County Chronicle, St. Charles, Chris Casey. It's the Navigato Show. "Again, good use of art. Story was fine."

Division D

1st Place: Effingham Daily News, Keith Stewart. Mission Complete. "Had a real nice feel to it, between the superb art and story and supplemental art. Real nice package."

2nd Place: Effingham Daily News, Keith Stewart. Extraordinary. "Real nice treatment on a big win. LOVED the main art and the play of the headline over it."

3rd Place: McDonough County Voice, Macomb, Scott Holland. Dancing Queens. "Good package. Maybe not quite as dynamic as the several I have rated higher."

Honorable Mention: The Commercial-News, Danville, Chad Dare. Emotional ending.

Division E

1st Place: The Pantagraph, Bloomington, Jim Benson. Emotional Muller shares credit for top MVC honor. "Outstanding writing on a touchy subject. Ties in the past tragedy in a way that describes without saying why Muller is coach of the year in more ways than one. Holds reader interest from start to finish and by listing names, pays tribute to the deceased. Loved it."

2nd Place: Quincy Herald-Whig, David Adam, Matt Schuckman. Unforgettable. "Lead draws reader into story and next graph summarizes why they should continue reading. Great use of quotes, including going the extra mile to get comments from the losing players who couldn't stop Brock."

3rd Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Sean Hammond. Tyrrell plays big role in postseason. "The lead makes the reader dive into the story and he/she isn't disappointed in reading on. Nice way the story pieced together the player's season with his great last two games. Also liked how the writer tied in the history of the school's last state championship."

Honorable Mention: NewsTribune, La Salle, Brandon LaChance. Dannis moves up, wins another title. "Loved how the lead tied the community into the performance of the athlete. Nice use of quotes to help describe the race."

Division F

1st Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Dave Eminian and Andy Kravetz. Rivermen's Opponents' Bus Rolls Over on I-74. "All around good job on news story about the opponents' bus wreck."

2nd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Aaron Ferguson. Racist Video. "This story was on an important subject. I had difficulty figuring out exactly what happened though. Would have appreciated more basic information."

3rd Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Bruce Miles. How Did Clubs Clinch National League Central? "Good use of short sections to explain how the Cubs stayed focused when it initially looked grim for the team."

Honorable Mention: The Dispatch & The Rock Island Argus, Marc Nessler. Racer in his 70s recalls last win in the '70s. "Fun story on a racer who gets in second win years apart."

CLASS 10 - SPORTS FEATURE

Division A

1st Place: Ford County Record, Paxton, Ross Brown. He was always cheering.' "Seems like we all know a 'Roy,' from our own home town. A well-developed, close-to-the-heart tribute."

2nd Place: Ford County Record, Paxton, Andrew Rosten. I'm sure I'm going to miss it all.' "Comprehensive, with a personal touch. Nice summary of an impressive career."

3rd Place: The Free Press Advocate, Wilmington, Brent Sumner. Matt Olsen throws first pitch after long road of recovery. "Nice coverage of a feel-good story."

Honorable Mention: Coal City Courant, Brent Sumner. Ken Allen receives 85th birthday present he won't forget. "Enjoyable descriptions of an unforgettable day."

Division B

1st Place: Bureau County Republican, Princeton, Kevin Hieronymus. Keeping count. "This is what I'm looking for in a feature story; a deep dive on a topic that impacts every team in the area in a variety of ways. Good work speaking with multiple coaches and teams. The added depth makes the story better and more engaging to a wider audience, and it helps to paper over any minor editing qualms I'd have. Strong and informative piece. The chart that explains the new rules is the cherry on top."

2nd Place: Republic-Times, Waterloo, Corey Saathoff. Remembering John Rheinecker. "This was a tough subject matter handled well by the writer. I appreciated the wealth of quotes from those who knew John. Nice work digging up prior quotes from Rheinecker to include in the piece. It's always tough to report about a death - especially under those circumstances - and I thought you did well with it."

3rd Place: Rantoul Press, Zack Carpenter. Richardson looks back fondly on legendary career. "This was a well-written story about friendships, and how they stick with you as life progresses. The historical information about Richardson's career was incorporated nicely."

Honorable Mention: Wednesday Journal of Oak Park & River Forest, Marty Farmer. Living the life of Lillig. "This was an interesting story and was written well, but I would have liked to hear more of these details from his friends and teammates. Oftentimes it's awkward for high school kids to talk about themselves; but when you get their friends and family on the record, you can learn a lot about them. Digging a little deeper is always worth the effort in a feature."

Division C

1st Place: Kane County Chronicle, St. Charles, Chris Rollin Walker. MOUND COUNT. "Exceptional job of explaining the efforts to protect young baseball players. Your conversational approach to telling readers that there are lots of questions how this will work and whether it will work was effective. Also liked the examples of local standout pitchers who have had the surgery. Great job."

2nd Place: Suburban Life Core Group, Joshua Welge. Larger than life. "Didn't know this man but I wanted to after reading this piece. Good examples, good voices."

3rd Place: Kane County Chronicle, St. Charles, Jason Rossi. No. 1,500 and counting for Lagger. "Nice feature on a person whose life had involved giving of himself. Loved the detail that he was stepping down from coaching because he wanted to do more for the Boys and Girls Club."

Honorable Mention: Kane County Chronicle, St. Charles, Jason Rossi. 'A DREAM COME TRUE.' "Good choice of topic with this look into a sport that doesn't get as much attention as others, and a woman who has been involved with it her entire life."

Division D

1st Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Jesse Severson. Daily Chronicle day featre. "Your opening, the use of language, the device about divine intervention, all the voices -- all of these worked to make this a terrific feature story. You kept me hooked from start to finish."

2nd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Jesse Severson. Daily Chronicle 'Lady' feature. "An interesting subject that I've often wondered about but had never before read about. Good work to get multiple voices in the story. Loved the detail of the Bearkittens. Good that you talked to players and coaches and athletic directors."

3rd Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Jackson White. All systems go for Macomb. "A short but fascinating piece on a big change for the basketball team. Had not heard of this approach, and would love to see one of their games. Good pullout with the key points."

Honorable Mention: The Journal-Standard, Freeport, Derrick Mason. I had to start over.' "Good story on something I hadn't heard of. I would have read more about this and the program to make these devices available to those who need them."

Division E

1st Place: The Daily Journal, Kankakee, John Dykstra. Heavy burden. "There are many great entries in this category, but this feature stands out thanks to the emotion woven throughout the story ... it is the perfect mix of emotional backstory and looking ahead to what is next for a coach who has lost everything."

2nd Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Sean Hammond. Attack left in his wake. "Dealing with adversity is a challenge in itself, but the subject of this story rises above a brutal attack in a school setting thanks to his connection to swimming. The feature does a good job of showing how sports became an opportunity for this young man to rise above the adversity."

3rd Place: NewsTribune, La Salle, Brandon LaChance. What if... "A poignant story involving a young man who's trajectory was changed completely thanks to the kindness of a family that took him in and adopted him. Their connection to bowling led him to a stellar high school career and a chance at college. Very well written and moving throughout."

Honorable Mention: Quincy Herald-Whig, Matt Schuckman. Guardian Angel. "A touching story about a young athlete and overcoming a tragic loss, this feature does a great job of giving necessary background information about the death of a father and the legacy carried on by his daughter through her soccer career. Well written and engaging throughout."

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Rick Telander. A season under the gun.' "This is so good, I'm not certain it's fair to even compare it to the rest of the field. Telander is that rare columnist who can write about life and death and sports with such skill and a newsman's eye for detail. He finds the beauty, and the hope, of these Orr kids amid a landscape bullets and anger. Outstanding"

2nd Place: Chicago Tribune Media Group, Dan Wiederer. Chicago Hope: The Secret; The Premiere; The Model; The Progress; The Journey. "Wow, talk about a deep dive into the scouting, procuring and grooming of a pro football player. A well-executed and sharply written series."

3rd Place: Belleville News-Democrat, Todd Eschman. Connors played tennis only way he knew: his mom's way. "What a nice trip down memory lane. Has all the elements of a good sports feature profile."

Honorable Mention: Journal Star, Peoria, Aaron Ferguson. Pitch Counts. "Who knew a story about pitch counts could flow so nicely. Might be a bit 'inside baseball' (excuse the pun) for the average reader but a good job."

CLASS 11 - FEATURE WRITING

Division A

1st Place: The Lexingtonian, Cammie Corlas Quinn, Laurie Sleeter. My Favorite Christmas Present.

2nd Place: The Leader, St. Joseph, Nora Maberry-Daniels. Gone but not forgotten.

3rd Place: Mahomet Citizen, Fred Kroner. A valuable lesson.

Honorable Mention: Cass County Star-Gazette, Beardstown, Ethan McIntyre. WorkcampNE makes trip to Beardstown.

Division B

1st Place: Riverside-Brookfield Landmark, Bob Uphues. More than just fun and games. "The hook with the inventor of Pac-Man coming into the arcade just pulled me in as a reader. Just a great overall story."

2nd Place: Mason County Democrat, Havana, Wendy Martin. Art and friendship never grow old. "The honesty of the two long-time friends just cracked me up as a reader. Loved the art and conversation. Well done."

3rd Place: O'Fallon Progress, Robyn Kirsch. Shiloh girl, 5, is every police officer's pal. "This story touched my heart. It is well written and super inspiring with family and officers talking about a child's devotion."

Honorable Mention: Bureau County Republican, Princeton, Goldie Rapp. The Kindness Project. "I enjoyed this story. It's not super long, but well told and the kind of story I like to read."

Division C

1st Place: Illinois Times, Springfield, Scott Faingold. Thinking Outside The Stereotype. "Wow, talk about trying to report on a difficult story that could be confusing and disjointed. But Scott did an outstanding job in making this important story not only readable, but also interesting and thought provoking. Weaving the actual exercises used into the story and the impact they have on appreciation of the topic is excellent. This is outstanding reporting and writing. Kudos for taking what could have been a boring story and making it not only interesting, but also enlightening to the reader. I wonder how many readers gave more thought to the exercises outlined to determine their own stereotype concepts? A much-needed story for people to understand, made understandable by this excellent writing and presentation."

2nd Place: Illinois Times, Springfield, Scott Faingold. You're a free man! Now what? "This is an outstanding piece of reporting, touching on the critical issue of 'what now.' Recently, in St. Louis, a man just out of a 20 year sentence intentionally held up a store, then asked the clerk to call the police, just so he could go back into prison because he couldn't survive being free. This story illustrates the problems once individual encountered but asks the broader question, 'What is society going to do about it?' Hearing the problems first-hand was moving. I would encourage Scott to follow-up on his outline of the recommendations other than a 'guide' to help these men and women. Society wronged them; it needs to give them all the help they need. The recommendations of IIP are a great start. But what's happening with them? Unless there's on going publicity about them, like so many other reports, they will fall by the wayside."

3rd Place: Kane County Chronicle, St. Charles, Stephanie N. Grimoldby. Early holiday – community shows support for family that adopted 5 girls. "What a moving story showing off the best of human nature and kindness. In this day and age of 'me' it's nice to know there still are those who are willing to put themselves out for others. What a heartwarming, gentle story of love and a community's response to the genuine nature of that love. It also shows the special nature of the Simon couple and how love can multiple itself over and over. Stephanie portrayed the story beautifully, mixing the quandary of their initial decision between husband and wife (I too saw, several times now, the Michael Oher story...how wonderful) and how it changed them, and the children they adopted, forever."

Honorable Mention: Valley Life, Sandwich, Katrina J.E. Milton. Mongolian missionaries. "An incredible story of faith, determination and resilience. Not only was the story intriguing and told well, it has an inspirational quality that must have helped countless readers realize that their dreams are not impossible if you only put them into action. Frankly I would have liked more about their day-to-day life in Mongolia; this story cries out for a much bigger feature story with more life details. But what's there is wonderful and provides a ray of sunshine for many others not totally satisfied with their current situation and looking for ways to make a change and help others at the same time. WELL DONE."

Division D

1st Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Tom Loewy. A life of hard work and education. "Beautiful writing style."

2nd Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Robyn Gautschy. Erika lives on.

3rd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Matthew Apgar. Genoa boy makes 'journey to heaven.'

Honorable Mention: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Christopher Heimerman. Daily Chronicle – Land Heroin Recovery Feature.

Division E

1st Place: Rockford Register Star, Sarah Wolf. Infant Loss Awareness. "Very powerful story about a difficult topic. Lede is strong and draws you right in. Heather's experience in the medical field, and her understanding that something was wrong adds so much to the tragedy. Quotes from the parents are sad as expected, but add so much to the story. This is the kind of story you can write with a great subject and people willing to talk about it."

2nd Place: Sauk Valley Media, Sterling, Christopher Heimerman. A weight lifted. "Fun story with a good lede. Interesting people can often lead to very interesting stories, but there are instances, and this is one, where you have to balance the quirky with the news. Well done."

3rd Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Jami Kunzer. 70 years strong. "I really enjoyed this story. There are times when you just let the voices tell the story and this is one of those instances. What this couple has to say is special."

Honorable Mention: Rockford Register Star, Maggie Hradecky. Cancer diagnosis complicates pregnancy. "Very good story with plenty of good voices throughout. Tough subject and the writer does a good job of getting into the nuts and bolts of what is going on, while not losing the heart of it."

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Stefano Esposito. Hunting for dinosaurs at the bottom of the world.' "Combining good descriptive writing while avoiding the pitfalls of dry science, this story about the 'Elvisaurus' really captured the imagination. From phrases like 'It's too cold to sweat' to recounting the challenges of collecting, then restoring, dinosaur bones, Mr. Esposito's feature was a clear winner."

2nd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Leslie Renken. Clean Bill of Health. "'Clean Bill of Health' combined two topics that don't generally capture my interest (health care and faith-based organizations) but Renker's story about Samaritan Ministries mixed religion, sociology, family dynamics and health care in a way that was straight-forward yet kept the reader engaged."

3rd Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Burt Constable. Who Killed Tim McNamee? "What a weird saga; these people could be in a soap opera. Mr. Constable did a nice job capturing the small town feel of the very oversized personality of Tim McNamee. My only quibble: I would have come right out and mentioned who was eventually charged with his killing, and why, rather than making it a sidebar."

Honorable Mention: Chicago Sun-Times, Neil Steinberg. 'A crumpled photo, a few clues and a father she has never met.' "Who doesn't like a mystery? Mr. Steinberg did a nice job featuring a woman's search for her birth father. Good use of quotes."

CLASS 12 - ORIGINAL COLUMN

Division A

1st Place: El Paso Journal, Cara Howard. Cara Howard's original column. "The personal details of her life are written in an engaging manner, making the features enjoyable to read."

2nd Place: Arcola Record-Herald, Lana Hill. Lana's Logic. "I could see myself or people I know in all three of her features. Reading them was a joy."

3rd Place: El Paso Journal, Raegan Rinchiuso. Raegan Rinchiuso's Reflections - original column. "Her features always had an underlying theme to tie up threads she had written about."

Honorable Mention: The Marion Republican, John Homan. John Homan columns. "It's good to see investigative reporting and thoughts about what those in authority are actually doing."

Division B

1st Place: The Hinsdalean, Pamela Lannom. Pamela Lannom. "Topical, easy-to-digest columns that inform and entertain. A sure-fired favorite among readers."

2nd Place: The Greenville Advocate, Dave Bell. Still Waiting; Distracted Drivers; Pilgrimage To Grand Tetons. "Nice slice-of-life columns. Your total eclipse column was excellent."

3rd Place: Bureau County Republican, Princeton, The late Terri Simon (1958-2017). The price of the party, etc. "Love your columns. I bet the one about the store clerk having a bad day really hit home with readers -- and me too."

Honorable Mention: The Journal-News, Hillsboro, Mary (Galer) Herschelman. A Grace-Filled Journey. "A fascinating series of glimpses into the always-challenging world of parenthood. Keep those columns coming."

Division C

1st Place: Kane County Chronicle, St. Charles, Pam Otto. Good Natured. "She's a very good author, provides lots of information but still makes the column engaging."

2nd Place: Austin Weekly News, Chicago, Arlene Jones . Arlene Jones on a variety of topics. "The calls to action in the columns were supported by the facts. Her opinions were well explained."

3rd Place: Kane County Chronicle, St. Charles, Jennifer DuBose. Tales from the Motherhood. "The columns were an interesting look at a family's life."

Division D

1st Place: Chicago Daily Law Bulletin, Timothy P. O'Neill. "Criminal Procedure" selections. "These columns are well researched and well thought out. They serve the reader well but giving perhaps a different viewpoint on the topic at hand."

2nd Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Tom Loewy. Tom Loewy Columns. "Good variety of subject matter, from the acorn collector -- who knew? -- to a thoughtful column, backed with on-the-street reporting, about the nature of freedom. Engagingly written."

3rd Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Tom Martin. Tom Martin Columns. "The quilt column is a winner. Readers can relate to stories such as this. Well written."

Honorable Mention: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Barry Schrader. Barry Schrader columns. "These columns are informative and perform a valuable service for readers. They're also personal, and readers can relate."

Division E

1st Place: The Herald-News, Joliet, Joe Hosey. Joe Hosey columns. "'If they only had a brain...'
Gripping presentation of sad situation. Great headline. I kept looking for you to inject your view but, really, this reads like a well-written news story by an obviously astute news editor. 'Ten Years Missing...'
' Solid work piecing together the threads to deliver a story of high interest... unusually long but holds interest to the very end (which is a measure of good writing). 'Still no answers...'
' You demonstrate the ability to make a crime stories come alive. The context you mix into sequence is well done and selection of concise quotes is a mark of professionalism. It's a good read, even when confronting matters I may not even want to read about. And, I learned about how parks are sometimes named. What more can a columnist expect to accomplish? Good job."

2nd Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Michael Penkava. Penkava columns. "Life lessons from death notices...' Worthy topic, well said. Amen! And that ID paragraph at the end: priceless. Great job. 'Free-range kid...' Wit with insight. Personal memories that readers not only relate to but relive. And you describe exactly what I see in my neighborhood (kids on a short leash called a USB cable). I'd read your column just to make sense of your parting paragraph, about a free range senior... Kudos. 'Cartis violentis...' more proof of your obvious literary skill. Keep up the good work!"

3rd Place: The Times, Ottawa, Scott T. Holland. Salmagundi. "'Mental health court...'" Somehow you found a way to lure readers into a good focus on mental health. I think this piece rambles, takes too long to get into the meat of your real subject ...and works. Maybe your presentation is the only way to work. Kudos for finding a way to make a tough subject more personal. 'Same page...' Real depth and analysis evident here. Appreciate the context you bring, with details that peddles influence. Clarity in writing, solid logic. Great effort to focus the community's attention on that same page. 'Failing our veterans..' Excellent way to personalize this topic by an example, giving voice to Buennemyer (and thus to other vets). Solid writing, tidy ending. Keep on writing, my friend, keep up the good work."

Honorable Mention: Daily Southown, Tinley Park, Donna Vickroy. A selection of columns by Donna Vickroy. "'Homeless...' Nice presentation, pushing readers to not look away. Jump headlines too soft for the message this delivers. Intro could be more compelling. 'Keep your hands to yourself...' Clear viewpoint (4th paragraph), and numeration graphically supports your points (wish the text statements were bold face, too). The challenge is discussing without preaching and you seemed to come across "telling it like it is" -- success!! Seems like this needs closure with one last jab (i.e. by connecting again to kindergarten or ...?) 'Hate...' Reread your 3rd paragraph and tell me if shorter, precise sentences might not be a better way. You share the viewpoints of others on ways to stand up... without enough guidance as to what you believe to be most effective. But your work here points to other sources (i.e. I'd like to read the Yes! magazine article about resisting with love) -- which actually proves your presentation works. Generally, and in all three samples, you are very thoughtful and deliberate in what you choose to write. Your sincerity glows."

Division F

1st Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Phil Luciano. Phil Luciano Columns. "It's clear that columnist Phil Luciano is in touch with his community and he's not afraid to challenge the establishment when necessary. We enjoyed the local flavor of his columns, particularly the one about the neighborhood mechanic who keeps on giving even after getting burned."

2nd Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Mary Mitchell. A selection of 3 columns by Mary Mitchell. "Mary Mitchell writes strong, hard-hitting commentary that we found engaging. She doesn't

mince words and she takes a stand. The column about innocent victims of drug-related violence was particularly thought-provoking."

3rd Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Mark Brown. A selection of 3 columns by Mark Brown.

"Powerful. That's how we describe Mark Brown's commentary on the laundromat entrepreneur who fell victim to the system. And the Christmas Eve storm reunion memories were delightful. Nice work."

Honorable Mention: The Dispatch & The Rock Island Argus, John Marx. Punches fly; Rickles gracious; His head is fine. "John Marx's account of an escalating fight at a youth basketball game is one of those columns that leaves the reader shaking his head. Well done. Also, the appreciation of Don Rickles was a joy to read."

CLASS 13 - SPORTS COLUMN

Division A

1st Place: Mahomet Citizen, Fred Kroner. Mahomet-Seymour notes. "Loved the history pieces, which complement the current coverage. Perfect for community journalism."

2nd Place: The Normalite, Normal, Steve Robinson. Steve Robinson's High School Highlights. "Good mix of topics and stories."

3rd Place: Oregon Republican Reporter, Andy Colbert. Sports Column. "I like his writing style. Simple. And you know what his opinions are."

Honorable Mention: Ford County Record, Paxton, Andrew Rosten. Rostradamus picks ..., 'She has helped make our lives special, as well', Rostradamus picks GCMS. "The one really was a story/tribute rather than a column."

Division B

1st Place: The Journal-News, Hillsboro, Kyle Herschelman. Center and Guard. "From a purely sports perspective, there is not a lot of meat to chew on in terms of sports and perhaps a little more writing about personal things than I might like as a sports fan, but the columnist has a good voice and shows that he is part of the local sports community. The entries show there is more to sports than just scores, and that there are things much more important, yet it is possible to have fun at the same time (by coloring his hair in a fundraising effort). The entry also shows how important sports can be to an athlete trying to come back from an injury."

2nd Place: Bureau County Republican, Princeton, Kevin Hieronymus. It was cool to have sister play football; etc. "I believe there was quite a bit of fall-off from the first place entry to the others. All the entries were flawed, either lacking opinion or commentary or informing a reader."

But they were typical of local community sports columns. The columnist in this case picks a series of interesting topics: hunting and brother-sister youth football players. I thought they could have been developed a little more and a bit more skillfully. The column on the youth softball coach with appendix cancer was more of a feature/update but it was done well. The best reading may have been the quotes and the letter from the coach at the end, but good writing sometimes gets out of the way and lets the emotions of people involved tell the story."

3rd Place: Morris Herald-News, Rob Oesterle. Rob Oesterle columns. "The writer offers good historical perspectives in his work. As an editor and a reader, I would like that. He has information that would back up any opinions he has. But the columns really only have one opinion piece, and that's about the conference switch for Morris. That was the best of the entries and yet could have been a little deeper, reflecting perhaps the opinion of coaches, who may think a harder league schedule helps them in the postseason."

Honorable Mention: Rantoul Press, Zack Carpenter. Zack Carpenter Sports Columns. "Some good sports topics in here, but some of the columns seemed almost endless while the most interesting potential column was the shortest. In writing about the serious and interesting subject matter of teen fathers, the writer does a nice job capturing the pride and excitement of young fathers-to-be. I may have skipped his lead about college athletes he's covered; I'm not sure it's relevant. I think it would have been interesting to include a little more about what the athletes thought about the evolution of whether there is still a stigma attached and what other people around them — their own parents, their coaches who are parental figures — thought about the situation and how they were handling it."

Division D

1st Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Eddie Carifio. Daily Chronicle- Carifio columns. "Strong take with good local examples. I enjoyed reading the columns."

2nd Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Mike Trueblood. Mike Trueblood Columns. "Good columns on local people/issues."

3rd Place: Chicago Daily Law Bulletin, William T. Gibbs. "Sports Torts" selections.

Honorable Mention: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Matthew Wheaton. Matthew Wheaton Columns.

Division E

1st Place: The Times, Ottawa, J.T. Pedelty. The Pedelty Box. "Outstanding job of expressing opinions and dealing with sensitive subjects. Although I didn't agree completely with some of his

views, I wanted to read to the end. Nice leads to draw you into the column and excellent endings. Too many other columnists write sports features rather than perspective on the subjects."

2nd Place: The Times, Ottawa, Charlie Ellerbrock. Inside the Game. "Writes well on a variety of subjects. Shows sense of community and perspective on the subjects of interest to the readers. I like that he wrote a poem in one of the columns and isn't afraid to try something different."

3rd Place: Quincy Herald-Whig, Matt Schuckman. Matt Schuckman sports columns. "Excellent writer who touches on various subjects and also deals with personal experiences with which the readers can identify and put themselves in his place. Gives opinions when needed and shows empathy for others."

Honorable Mention: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Loren Tate. Tatelines. "Very good writer. Deals with interesting subjects and expresses views when needed. Also adds background and statistics that benefit the columns."

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Rick Telander. A season under the gun.' "An extremely powerful series of columns that walk the fine line between sports and 'real life.' Incredible writing merged with a fascinating topic makes this entry hard to ignore atop a very crowded and talented pool of columns."

2nd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Kirk Wessler. Kirk Wessler Columns. "The engaging, colorful writing in these columns proves that the topic doesn't need to be super deep to create a captivating read. I love the detail and the rhythm of these pieces."

3rd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Phil Luciano. Phil Luciano. "The first two paragraphs of the corn column are poetic perfection, and set the tone for not only that creative column, but for the rest of Luciano's entries. Well written, these columns draw you in and never let you go until the final sentence."

Honorable Mention: Chicago Tribune Media Group, Steve Rosenbloom. 1. Time for Bulls to clean house 2. A stunning, sad development 3. Fox a pro at killing the buzz. "Rosenbloom doesn't pull any punches in any of his three entries, confronting the Bulls franchise, the Bears coaching staff and looking at an odd allergy to hockey equipment. Quality writing and well-developed plans of attack makes these columns must-reads."

CLASS 14 - PHOTO SERIES

Division A

1st Place: El Paso Journal, Jennie Kearney. A run on Easter eggs. "A good edit for an annual easter egg hunt. The pictures get to the point and all have something different to add to the collection."

2nd Place: Greene Prairie Press, Carrollton, Carmen Ensinger. Demo Derby excitement. "Simple edit that gets to the point of the subject. The Photog caught the fire and the rescue."

3rd Place: Beecher City Journal, PJ Ryan. U.S. Vets. "The photographer found a little girl who was entertaining herself with a flag during the ceremony which made for some nice moments. Also had other supporting shots."

Honorable Mention: Oregon Republican Reporter, Earleen Hinton. Practice Session. "This simple 2-picture package demonstrates the rigors of marching band rehearsal."

Division B

1st Place: Oswego Ledger, Steven Buyansky. Tribue to lives lost. "Composition and the play with light and dark really highlight this series. Some technically stunning shots here that are endearing."

2nd Place: Effingham & Teutopolis News Report, Herb Meeker, Kim Jansen. ETNewsReport_PhotoSeries_Class14. "This is a wonderful slice-of-life look at a community that has so many different ways to celebrate the same day. These photographs were brimming with life and energy and told me a sun-dripped story of life's little moments."

3rd Place: The Hinsdalean, Jim Slonoff. The spirit of Christmas. "From the looks of it, Christmas turned out to really be the most wonderful time of the year. An infectious charming photo series."

Honorable Mention: The Hinsdalean, Jim Slonoff. Things were looking up. "A simple headline and a simple concept that presents round laughs on a perfectly innocent childhood right of passage: the spelling bee."

Division C

1st Place: Suburban Life Core Group, Mark Busch. Eclipse amazes visitors at the College of DuPage viewing party. "This group of eclipse photos get to the point with out a lot of other distracting images. Nice edit."

2nd Place: Kane County Chronicle, St. Charles, Sandy Bressner. Horrific event.' "Photographer did a good job of capturing all aspects of this event."

3rd Place: Pioneer Press Media Group, Brian O'Mahoney. State Softball. "A good report of action and feature shots of a winning team."

Honorable Mention: Jersey County Journal, Jerseyville, Rachel McGlasson, Robert Lyons. Colors of the county fair. "Nice balance of shot selection of the fair activities."

Division D

1st Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Matthew Apgar. Genoa boy making 'journey to heaven.'
"The time invested in covering this awesome kid and his tough story was apparent through the photographer's images. They show a wide range of this boy's life experiences."

2nd Place: The Journal-Standard, Freeport, Max Gersh. Displaced residents. "Another tough story, but well done. I think the photographer has done a good job capturing the despair the residents of this building must have been feeling. I like the use of framing and the contrast of light and shadows."

3rd Place: Effingham Daily News, Keith Stewart. Hometown Christmas. "I'm a fan of wide angle myself so I love that the viewer is really being drawn in to these photos. The color is also very good."

Honorable Mention: The Journal-Standard, Freeport, Arturo Fernandez. Paralyzed golfer. "It's an interesting story. The photos are all technically good. But I fail to get a sense of how the game 'saved his life.' Four of the photos show him among a wide landscape as if he's all by himself and separated from the other golfers. It seems like this is supposed to be a happy story, but the images don't make me feel that way."

Division E

1st Place: The Southern Illinoisan, Carbondale, Isaac Smith. Housing crisis in Cairo. "This photo series stands out to me because of the story it tells and the balance it strikes with its photos. With a story like this, so many times it seems tempting to only focus on the rough living conditions. These photos also focus on the hearts and spirits of the families that live in these conditions, which gives the story a needed context. Each of the photos here are strong images that also work together well with each other, making this a first-place story in the category."

2nd Place: Rockford Register Star, Kayli Plotner. Amadeus the MVP. "This photo series effectively tells the story with strong individual images all supporting the main focus. The photos have lots of good emotion, and strongly express Amadeus' personality. Building his character through the photos helps tell the story in a nice way."

3rd Place: The State Journal-Register, Springfield, Ted Schurter and Rich Saal. Totally Spectacular. "Each individual photo in this series is striking, helping it stand out in the category. The photos do a great job of capturing the spectacle of the solar eclipse."

Honorable Mention: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Rick Danzl. A day at the rest stop. "I admire the idea of this photo series quite a bit. The photos effectively contribute to the overall story, capturing the atmosphere of the rest stop well."

Division F

1st Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Fred Zwicky. 47 Years a Murderer. "Incredibly emotional series of photos that capture your attention and tell a story without the use of a word. I love the angles, the variety and the sheer emotion shown in each shot. These images make me want to look up the story and read more -- which is the benchmark of truly impressive photography in the realm of newspaper journalism."

2nd Place: Chicago Tribune Media Group, Brian O'Mahoney. State Wrestling. "Taking tasteful and engaging wrestling photos can be harder than most people realize, but this photographer does an amazing job of capturing some amazing images that give the reader a feel of what the atmosphere must have been like while showcasing some talented athletes in their glory. There were a few images that were especially captivating, and would be easy options to anchor coverage not only on a sports cover -- but the front page of any newspaper."

CLASS 15 - SPOT NEWS PHOTO

Division A

1st Place: The Navigator & Journal-Register, Albion, Steve Hartsock. Crossville tornado survivors. "Interesting that during this embrace — this comforting moment — the subject is peering into his cell phone. It's become such a common sight these days...someone's view is locked onto their phone."

CLASS 15 - SPOT NEWS PHOTO

Division A

2nd Place: Greene Prairie Press, Carrollton, Carmen Ensinger. Fire devastates downtown White Hall. "Nicely composed. Image captures the cracking off moment of the wall. Top 3 images stand out way above the rest of the entries."

3rd Place: Ford County Record, Paxton, Will Brumleve. Fire at Coulter Farm. "It is odd to arrive at a fire scene before the firemen. Wondering if a fireman setting up to attack this might have made for a stronger contest entry. Just a thought. Could have cropped off whatever that is on the left."

Honorable Mention: Nokomis Free Press-Progress, John Broux. Lone fireman. "Outstanding in his field? Simple yet graphic natural cover fire image. Tonality of the finished image could have helped improve the standing for judging purposes. Could see several different options for cropping. Makes me wonder how is WAS run?"

Division B

1st Place: The Galena Gazette, Dan Burke. Tumbling down. "Great details - the wisp of dust from the window, the cracks in the brick billing, soft and hard edges, along with heavy machinery."

2nd Place: The Greenville Advocate, Dave Bell. Track Hoe. "Nice angle on subject, as well as focus, composition, and subject matter."

3rd Place: The Greenville Advocate, Dave Bell. Car Chase. "This has so many of the right pieces - the guy in handcuffs, tire marks in grass, damaged bumper, law and emergency responders, yet none of them are facing camera."

Honorable Mention: Bureau County Republican, Princeton, Kevin Hieronymus. Caleb comes home. "Photographer demonstrated good control of camera with depth of field capturing both foreground and youth inside car."

Division C

1st Place: Kane County Chronicle, St. Charles, Sandy Bressner. Delnor Hospital hostage situation.

2nd Place: Suburban Life Core Group, Mark Busch. Bridal shop fire in Elmhurst.

Division D

1st Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Matthew Apgar. Lucky to be alive. "The boy's emotion is clearly shown in the aftermath of the wreck. The photographer captured that very well."

2nd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Matthew Apgar. Extrication. "Well composed. Easy to read. You can figure out what's going on without reading the caption."

3rd Place: Breeze-Courier, Taylorville, Owen Lasswell. A Silhouetted Soldier. "A different way to shoot something that is a common assignment. The silhouette with the late afternoon sunset was a nice touch to frame the soldier in the car."

Honorable Mention: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Steven Davis. Jimmy's Pizza Fire. "You can tell the devastation in this photo. You can read this really fast, quickly knowing the location and that the place was a total loss. Nice composition."

Division E

1st Place: The Telegraph, Alton, John Badman. Girl rescued from basement of burning house. "Powerful and moving. Forces the viewer to empathize with all involved. Great photo in a tremendously strong category with many moving submissions. You should be proud of this one."

2nd Place: The Telegraph, Alton, John Badman. Horrific scene at fatal car fire. "In any other contest in any other year, this would have been a first place. Honest, unadulterated human emotion. I was truly moved by your photo. This was an amazingly strong category with multitudes of amazing photos."

3rd Place: The Telegraph, Alton, John Badman. Comforting a potential fire victim's family. "Gripping moment captured perfectly. Good job in a very tough category."

Honorable Mention: Quincy Herald-Whig, Michael Kipley. 2017 Eclipse. "Technically perfect photo. This was a tough category in which you captured the kids' awe and wonder. Great pic."

Division F

1st Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Rick West. Consoling Each Other. "Captured a truly emotional moment."

2nd Place: Belleville News-Democrat, Steve Nagy. Agony.

3rd Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, John Starks. Overcome By Grief.

Honorable Mention: The Dispatch & The Rock Island Argus, Todd Mizener. Tragic end for cyclist.

CLASS 16 - GENERAL NEWS PHOTO

Division A

1st Place: Forest Park Review, Alexa Rogals. Seniors NYE. "The more you look at this photo, the more you see. Soft lighting helps convey the emotion evident between these dancers. This entry covers all contest criteria: subject, composition, originality, technical skill."

2nd Place: The Navigator & Journal-Register, Albion, T.J. Hug. Trustee Election Celebration. "Great timing to snap this one, especially with courthouse sign as backdrop. Bonus points for original way of injecting emotion in an election outcome that (evidently) was anything but humdrum."

3rd Place: Deerfield Review, Brian O'Mahoney. Father Daughter Dance. "This photo captures the moment very nicely! Use of available light enhances the mood this scene projects. She only has eyes for him, and him for her -- how can you photograph this scene any better? Good job!"

Honorable Mention: Oakland Independent, Janice Hunt. Lava at first sight. "Great emotion in this shot! Everything about this photo works. Kids always make for great photo opportunities but not always with such a great result as this one. Good job!"

Division B

1st Place: Lake County Journal, Grayslake, Candace Johnson. Bite Practice. "This photo really has it all - action, technical excellence, composition and tells a story. Well done."

2nd Place: Bureau County Republican, Princeton, Mike Vaughn. Flying the flag at Homestead. "The originality demonstrated in this low-angle shot is an excellent technique for this photo. The photographer timed it perfect to secure the story-telling aspect with the stars and stripes."

3rd Place: Bureau County Republican, Princeton, Mike Vaughn. First, Crush. "The mood, energy and atmosphere in this event comes through in the clothing colors and movement as well as the subject's expressions. Very nicely done."

Honorable Mention: Bureau County Republican, Princeton, Dave Cook. Choo! Choo! "The photographer did an excellent job using angle and depth of field to show this boy's captivation with the model train and the size of the set-up."

Division C

1st Place: Suburban Life Core Group, Mark Busch. Eclipse viewing at College of DuPage. "This is a fun photo. The subject's expression is what makes this photo. (And he's the only one looking up.)"

2nd Place: Austin Weekly News, Chicago, Alexa Rogals. 200 Fathers. "A nice moment with the nonchalant kid in the midst of excited parents."

3rd Place: The MidWeek, DeKalb, Katrina J.E. Milton. Car show flyover. "This photo looks like Anytown USA during a flyover. The jets in combination with the people in the foreground reacting to them makes it interesting."

Honorable Mention: Pioneer Press Media Group, Brian O'Mahoney. Peace Vigil. "Nice lighting sets this apart. The clean background makes it an easy read. No distractions to take away from the subject."

Division D

1st Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Matthew Apgar. Nicholle Martinez guilty verdict. "Nice composition on this. The faces tell the story about their emotion after the verdict."

2nd Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Steven Davis. Proud Marcher. "Nice reaction in this photo. Unfortunately, the focus was on the sign and not on the kid, which hurt the photo."

3rd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Matthew Apgar. Remembering the NIU shooting. "The photographer captured nice light on the subject during this emotional moment, which helped tell the story."

Honorable Mention: Pekin Daily Times, Sharon Woods Harris. PCHS zoology students teach grade schoolers. "The photographer found a funny moment during what could have been a routine assignment."

Division E

1st Place: The State Journal-Register, Springfield, Ted Schurter. Never too old. "In an extremely competitive category, this photo pulled all of its elements together to stand out as first place. The lighting, composition, body language, and story telling all capture the moment so well. The touch of the daughter's hand to her mother's hair renders the emotion of the moment in a beautiful way."

2nd Place: Rockford Register Star, Arturo Fernandez. Free at Last. "There were many good, spontaneous reaction photos in this category. The best ones were able to separate themselves with good use of context. This image gives the viewer enough valuable information to tell the story and communicate the emotion of the moment."

3rd Place: Rockford Register Star, Arturo Fernandez. New Family. "This is another strong, emotional photo that gives good context to the overall story. Like second place, this photo is

sharply focused on communicating one emotion of the moment. This helps it stand out in a crowded category."

Honorable Mention: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, H. Rick Bamman. Surprise Homecoming. "This is another solid emotional reaction photo, with the reflection giving enough context to the story to communicate the idea to the viewer."

Division F

1st Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Fred Zwicky. Fond farewell. "Very sweet photo."

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

3rd Place: The Dispatch & The Rock Island Argus, Meg McLaughlin. Touching balloon release.

Honorable Mention: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Brian Hill. Ready To Get To Work.

CLASS 17 - FEATURE PHOTO

Division A

1st Place: Piatt County Journal-Republican, Monticello, Mike Heiniger. A princess wedding! "The little girl's face is great. She looks unsure if the man in costume is a weirdo or if she should comfort him."

2nd Place: El Paso Journal, Kim Kearney. Family surprises World War II veteran. "Wonderful facial expressions here."

3rd Place: El Paso Journal, Jennie Kearney. (Un)Seasonal Work. "A nice view of Americana even as the weather kept everyone guessing."

Honorable Mention: Barrington Courier-Review, Brian O'Mahoney. Dancing With Dad. "This photo is great because you can just catch a hint of uncertainty in her face even as she trusts her dad to bring her down safely."

Division B

1st Place: Lake County Journal, Grayslake, Candace Johnson. Framed Picture. "I picked this photo for first because it is a 'right time' photo. It's crisp, has perfect thirds balance and vibrant color. He appears to be in the frame, very visually appealing."

2nd Place: The Galena Gazette, Ben Otis. Rodeo. "Excellent action shot. This photo could run by itself and tell the story."

3rd Place: The Galena Gazette, Mark VanOsdol. Sticky situation. "This photo is crisp, has good proportions and tells a story. It can be flexible in run date and relates to nearly everyone. Very 'american family'."

Honorable Mention: The Greenville Advocate, Dave Bell. Teddy And Bear. "Without a caption, this photo would have people laughing. It's very comical, historical and tells its own story."

Division C

1st Place: Suburban Life Core Group, Mark Busch. Bubble chasers in Western Springs. "This a combination of nice reaction and composition with the bubble framing the two kids."

2nd Place: Suburban Life Core Group, Mark Busch. Tumblers amaze crowd. "The photographer, instead of focusing on the tumbler, focused on the kids watching. Their faces tell the story."

3rd Place: Pioneer Press Media Group, Brian O'Mahoney. Balloon Warrior. "The subject's reaction is what makes this photo work, and that's all about the timing."

Honorable Mention: Kane County Chronicle, St. Charles, Mary Beth Nolan . Fireworks. "Using the viewers as a way to frame the fireworks made this photo special. Good job balancing all the technical things that needed to happen."

Division D

1st Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Steven Davis. Marching Streaks Reflected. "Great eye-catching photo."

2nd Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Steven Davis. Julotta Christmas Service.

3rd Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Steven Davis. Skater Boy and His Shadow.

Honorable Mention: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Matthew Apgar. Volunteers care.

Division E

1st Place: NewsTribune, La Salle, Chris Yucus. Spirit Slide. "Excellent capture of sharpness, detail and action of the muddy water splashing around the young man's face. I love the expression on his face and also the muted smile of the woman behind him. The eye weaves

through the photo by the use of the human form giving it great journalistic style. Great color and top notch catch of action."

2nd Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Stephen Haas. Flower display. "I love the surreal clean quality of this image, which has the elements of a high key photo. Very pleasing to the eye. I also love the splash of red flowers and the man's dark hair which adds amazing contrast to the image."

3rd Place: The State Journal-Register, Springfield, Justin L. Fowler. Wedding day slide. "Every time I looked at this photo, I smiled. Great expressions on the faces and a unique setting--a whole wedding party on a giant slide! Great shot!"

Honorable Mention: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, H. Rick Bamman. Cycling Painters. "I just love the long shadows in this image and all the crisp lines that lead the eye around the photo. The bicycle adds so much to the image—a great catch."

Division F

1st Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Paul Valade. Stretching His Legs. "Great images evoke an emotional response. This image certainly made laugh."

2nd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Fred Zwicky. Super window washers. "A beautiful moment between window washer superheroes and a pediatric patient."

3rd Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Patrick Kunzer. Sky High.

Honorable Mention: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Mark Welsh. The Wait Of A Lifetime. "While there's a great caption on this photo, it really wasn't needed. The face of the 100-year-old woman getting a close-up view of the World Series trophy told the story."

CLASS 18 - PERSONALITY PORTRAIT

Division A

1st Place: Chenoa Town Crier, Laurie Sleeter. Mr. Krones. "A candid portrait of a well-known face in the community."

2nd Place: Barrington Courier-Review, Brian O'Mahoney. Pinewood Loser. "A Cub Scout's emotional reaction to a disappointing finish in a pinewood derby race."

3rd Place: El Paso Journal, Jennie Kearney. Preschool paramedics. "Good composition and cute expressions combine for a fun portrait."

Honorable Mention: Mahomet Citizen, Fred Kroner. Treats in town. "A cute expression during trick or treating."

Division B

1st Place: Lake County Journal, Grayslake, Candace Johnson. Recycled Art. "Nice use of color in this animated portrait."

2nd Place: Lake County Journal, Grayslake, Candace Johnson. Storming Normandy. "Good composition and expression in this portrait."

3rd Place: The Hinsdalean, Jim Slonoff. Song and dance break. "Nice action and expression in this shot."

Honorable Mention: The Hinsdalean, Jim Slonoff. It was another great night to be a Red Devil. "Nice capture. The photographer was obviously looking for the action during this graduation."

Division C

1st Place: Pioneer Press Media Group, Brian O'Mahoney. Saying Goodbye. "This portrait clearly shows the emotional connection between a police officer and his K9 partner. A tender moment."

2nd Place: Austin Weekly News, Chicago, Alexa Rogals. Stella Johnson. "A well-composed image that's both simple and quite effective."

3rd Place: The MidWeek, DeKalb, Katrina J.E. Milton. World War II veteran. "The simplicity of this portrait is its strength. Effective and straightforward."

Honorable Mention: Kane County Chronicle, St. Charles, Sandy Bressner. Birthday girls. "A beautiful moment that is well-composed."

Division D

1st Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Steven Davis. Tim Riggs. "So much can be in this man's eyes: years on the job, uncertainty, determination. It tells a story. Magnificent shot."

2nd Place: Effingham Daily News, Graham Milldrum. Pigs as Pets. "Sometimes the best thing we can do for our readers is give them something to giggle about. This pulls the reader immediately into the story."

3rd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Matthew Apgar. A Friday Night Ridealong In DeKalb. "This a creative way of showing part of a cop's shift and showing that they too see the parade of drama and trauma that we read about in the newspaper."

Honorable Mention: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Matthew Apgar. Shootings plague DeKalb. "Good job portraying a cop in a tough moment."

Division E

1st Place: The Herald-News, Joliet, Eric Ginnard. Open Wide. "This very original photo shows the photographer's creativity and sense of whimsy while perfectly portraying the subject matter. This caught my eye immediately!"

2nd Place: The Herald-News, Joliet, Eric Ginnard. All Star. "It would seem impossible to the average person to capture this photo so clearly, and with such dramatic and perfect lighting. It also offers an excellent portrayal of this young man's talent."

3rd Place: Rockford Register Star, Max Gersh. Balet. "While there are no doubt endless ways a photographer could shoot a ballet teacher, this very original and eye-catching shot's inclusion of the dancers' straining muscles portrays the exacting standards of the subject. Excellent!"

Honorable Mention: The Southern Illinoisan, Carbondale, Isaac Smith. Dalton Thompson. "The distinct horizontal lines of blue, green and tan and the perfect size of the subject, plus the sweat on his back, very expertly portray this subject."

Division F

1st Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Fred Zwicky. Wagon man. "This is a beautiful photo, and the detail makes it a wonderful study of this man's face. This is definitely a photo to be proud of."

2nd Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Brian Hill. Paralyzed Vet Awaiting Care. "Some of the best portraits understand the importance of the scene beyond the faces. Showing the soldier's whole room helps the viewer understand the enormity of the issue."

3rd Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Patrick Kunzer. Face Of A Hero. "Getting such a portrait right in the middle of breaking news is not a something we see every day. Everything about this photo tells the story of this woman's heroism and is a testament to understanding how important the people are in any breaking news situation."

Honorable Mention: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Brian Hill. Back On Her Feet. "Excellent lighting and technique reveal a lot of detail in the subjects' expressions. This is one of those shots that is so candid it is hard to believe there is someone there with a camera. I feel like I'm there and not simply seeing this through a lens."

CLASS 19 - SPORTS PHOTO

Division A

1st Place: Glenview Announcements, Brian O'Mahoney. Frustrated Coach. "This is just a fun photo to view. Great expression across entire face (eyes, mouth). Hands are wonderfully expressive as well and really make this picture by framing our coach's face so well. Nicely done."

2nd Place: Barrington Courier-Review, Brian O'Mahoney. Wet Hit. "Great example of that MOMENT of impact. You can almost hear the pads crunching. As John Madden would say, 'Stuff is flying off the player's uniform.' Really nice frame."

3rd Place: Oregon Republican Reporter, Earleen Hinton. Heated words. "Nice moment of conflict. That's part of sports. Good capture."

Honorable Mention: The Harrisburg Register, Michael Dann. Putting down the tag. "Nice timing with the cloud of dust about to envelope the second baseman. Nicely done."

Division B

1st Place: Naperville Sun, Brian O'Mahoney. Doubles Jubilation. "Good clean background and great reaction. This is a good field of entries. Some of the strongest entries are the ones that have the cleanest backgrounds and strong composition. This is among those. Good job dude! Enjoyed seeing your work."

2nd Place: Park Ridge Herald-Advocate, Brian O'Mahoney. Save. "Another really clean image in a field of generally overall strong pictures. It's simple, peak action. Your entries are good and stand out. nicely done."

3rd Place: Pike Press, Pittsfield, Doug Pool. Saukees rattle bats early and often. "This could use a slightly tighter crop. Hand is not on the plate. Draw us into that a touch closer. Good, peak action moment."

Honorable Mention: Bureau County Republican, Princeton, Jeff Schlesinger. Heartbreak. "Now that's some emotion. Captured the feelings of some bad defeat. An end to something. Better toning could improve the standing in this image but can't beat the emotion. Good capture."

Division C

1st Place: Jersey County Journal, Jerseyville, Rachel McGlasson. Rompin' around at the Jersey County Fair. "Love every aspect of the photo, right down to the expression on the horse's face. Flip a coin as to which of the rodeo shots I liked more, but both were superior to the rest."

2nd Place: Jersey County Journal, Jerseyville, Rachel McGlasson. Colors of the Jersey County Fair - Rodeo. "Another picture that tells a thousand words. So much to look at, particularly the urgency you can see in the body language of the staff and rider."

3rd Place: Kane County Chronicle, St. Charles, Sandy Bressner. Defeated. "Nicely cropped. Good image. Summed up the game and the miss at the end."

Honorable Mention: Suburban Life Core Group, Mark Busch. Downers Grove North volleyball celebrates. "Perfect angle for this shot of the teammates savoring a point."

Division D

1st Place: The Journal-Standard, Freeport, Arturo Fernandez. Rainy Run. "I love everything about this shot. The exposure and focus is spot on. But the dedication it took to get is what really amazes me. That rain pouring down is incredible!"

2nd Place: The Journal-Standard, Freeport, Max Gersh. Alexa Ballard. "There were a number of jube shots in this category. However none capture the contrast between winning AND losing like this one does."

3rd Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Steven Davis. Hit By Pitch. "Perfect timing ... on the photographer's part anyway. The beauty of photography capturing a fleeting moment which really cannot be seen by the human eye. I love the little tidbits given in the cutline in that he stayed in the game and earned a save later too. After that I would've been 'I'm done!'"

Honorable Mention: Lake County News-Sun, Gurnee, Brian O'Mahoney. No Tag? "Focus and exposure are perfect. Caught a great moment. I really feel for the catcher's team, you just know they've been griping about that play ever since the photo came out!"

Division E

1st Place: Daily Southown, Tinley Park, Brian O'Mahoney. Eye on the Ball. "Very nice shot. A different, refreshing view of volleyball."

2nd Place: Herald & Review, Decatur, Clay Jackson. Rodeo. "Nice job raising your vantage point for a differ angle and clean background."

3rd Place: Rockford Register Star, Max Gersh. IceHogs. "Nice overhead imagine with a lot of action, and a goal."

Honorable Mention: The Herald-News, Joliet, Eric Ginnard. More Mud. "Interesting shot from a mud run. Not your typical 'jumping over an obstacle' photo."

Division F

1st Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, John Starks. Tragedy At The Track. "A fabulous story-telling image. This is a photo that people will remember and talk about. A situation where sports meets news."

2nd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Ron Johnson. Heads collide. "A lot of players are included in this photo, but everything is in the right place. Great action and emotion."

3rd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Fred Zwicky. Triumph on high. "A quick, clean read with great emotion."

Honorable Mention: Journal Star, Peoria, Matt Dayhoff. Diving catch. "Nice peak action. Great expression. Good daily photo."

CLASS 20 - EDITORIAL CARTOON

Division B

1st Place: Wednesday Journal of Oak Park & River Forest, Marc Stopeck. D97 Tax Hike. "That's always the way of tax increases. Great imagery!"

2nd Place: Pike Press, Pittsfield, Bill Beard. Veterans Day. "Very powerful imagery to remind readers of the end goal for which so many offered their service in the first place."

3rd Place: Wednesday Journal of Oak Park & River Forest, Marc Stopeck. Community Rec Center. "Too often editorial cartoons that are extremely wordy often miss making their point. The incantation in this one, however, is just too enjoyable."

Honorable Mention: Pike Press, Pittsfield, Bill Beard. Proposed wind farm. "Worth framing for anyone living in Pike County."

Division E

1st Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Lincoln Delporte, Dan Corkery. United is coming ... "The story of United's treatment of passengers was a major story in 2017, so I'm sure localizing it struck a chord with readers."

2nd Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Lincoln Delporte, Dan Corkery. Wrong envelope. "A good local tie-in on a national story of interest."

Division F

1st Place: Belleville News-Democrat, Glenn McCoy. Rauner's Charlie Brown moment. "Perfect embodiment of Illinois politics."

2nd Place: Belleville News-Democrat, Glenn McCoy. Broadcast nudes. "Funny and sad at the same time."

3rd Place: Belleville News-Democrat, Glenn McCoy. Opioid deaths. "Great imagery for the state of America's addiction."

Honorable Mention: Belleville News-Democrat, Glenn McCoy. Dreamer.

CLASS 21 - ILLUSTRATION

Division B

1st Place: The Niles Bugle, Shelley Holmgren. Trophy Hunters. "Very nice cover graphic. Especially like the use of colors."

2nd Place: The Galena Gazette, Jay Dickerson. Work of Art. "Incorporating the children's work into the text looks nice."

3rd Place: The Niles Bugle, Shelley Holmgren. Fandom Fest. "Great look overall."

Honorable Mention: Arcola Record-Herald, David Porter. Homecoming bonfire. "Neat imagery but I would have liked to see it in the context of the story."

Division D

1st Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Staff. Everything is getting black. "The illustration is very dark, which reflects the headline, and we assume the headline is a quote from within the story. We believe this illustration does a great job enhancing the story."

2nd Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Staff. Opportunity lures brightest away. "The image, though simple, summarizes the story, so readers can learn quite a lot just by viewing the the illustration."

3rd Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Jay Redfern. PRESIDENTS' DAY Faves and Flops. "We really liked the layout of the page, and the illustrations were very nicely done, however, the sub-headline suggests 'local experts' but the illustrations are of the entire continental US."

Division E

1st Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Mike Goebel. Jalen Coleman-Lands. "This illustration encourages readers to interact with multiple sections of the publication. It's a creative way to illustrate a story and truly have the readers engaged with the publication. While it looks great on screen, I'm sure it was even better in print!"

2nd Place: Herald & Review, Decatur, Emily Shullaw. Double play. "This entire layout is very appealing. Not only is there a great illustration, it has been paired with a successful color scheme and graphics. It would have been easy to not do much with this story visually. Adding these elements enhances the package."

3rd Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Lyncoln Delporte. University of Illinois. "The illustrations in this spread are well done and give a better more intimate feel than pictures would. The postcard theme is tastefully done."

Honorable Mention: Quincy Herald-Whig, Cody Bozarth. Relief for red eyes. "Great job making a creative layout for this topic. It works very well and draws the reader in."

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Tribune Media Group, Phil Geib. A field guide to Illinois' fantastic beastss. "Extremely unique set of illustrations help draw attention to a fun look at some of the mysterious creatures people reportedly have seen in Illinois. I love the detail of each creature and the map showing the general part of the state each creature has been spotted. The mark of a truly good illustration is bringing to life something that can't be done via a traditional photograph, and this definitely is the case with these creations."

2nd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Michael Anthony Noel. Angry coaches. "A fairly simplistic illustration does a great job of leading into a story on coaches that get out of control. Obviously, it would be impossible to show this via photographs without calling out a specific coach, so using the illustration helps avoid that sticky situation while giving readers a quick, creative idea of what to expect in the story."

3rd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Michael Anthony Noel. Unacceptable. "A neat way to go beyond a typical photo-based layout, this illustration gives the package a sophisticated feel and definitely draws in a reader. The only drawback is that the illustration by itself doesn't give the reader the jist of the story to come ... that has to be ferreted out from the story. Still, this is an

impressive way to engage readers and provides a unique take on what would otherwise be three traditional headshots."

CLASS 22 - INFORMATIONAL GRAPHIC

Division A

1st Place: Lebanon Advertiser, David Porter. Crash. "Wow, great graphic to tell of this local historic event."

2nd Place: Forest Park Review, Jacquinete Baldwin, Jill Wagner. Which is a sandwich? "Made me hungry for lunch!"

3rd Place: The Sidell Reporter, Rinda Maddox and Suzanne Woodard. National Apple month. "As a baker, I can see how this would be very useful. Great addition to the story!"

Division B

1st Place: Cook County Chronicle, Chicago, Joseph Daniszewski. How They Voted. "An easy-to-read and educational graphic to tell how Senators and Congressmen voted. This one is first place because it was so user-friendly! Well done!"

2nd Place: The Joliet Bugle, Shelley Holmgren. Disasters. "A very good thing to think about and done in a appealing way!"

3rd Place: Oswego Ledger, Julie Beaulieu. Property tax bill time is here again. "Very easy to read and well organized."

Honorable Mention: Pike Press, Pittsfield, Verity Woody. Favorite things about Pike County. "Love the idea of this and it can be done in any community! There is lots of things to love and they are expressed in a non-cluttered way and easy to read."

Division C

1st Place: Jersey County Journal, Jerseyville, Annette Marshall. IDNR seeks landowners to enroll acres in IRAP. "Very nicely done! I ranked this one as first because I feel it fits the category the best."

2nd Place: Suburban Life Core Group, Jes Spivak. Step into the past. "Beautiful photos and map to draw attention to the story below."

3rd Place: Suburban Life Core Group, Jes Spivak. Sloane House among Illinois sites on National Register of Historic Places. "Does the job well."

Honorable Mention: Shorewood Sentinel, Shelley Holmgren. NASCAR.

Division D

1st Place: Pekin Daily Times, Danielle Homerin. Cell Phone Tickets. "Simple, but eye-catching and you can tell the information being presented at just a glance!"

2nd Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Staff. Lead screenings 2015. "Gets lost a little in the text, but the graphic itself is very good and very important topic."

3rd Place: Pekin Daily Times, Danielle Homerin. School District Enrollment Comparison. "The 3rd and honorable mention were a very close call because of the same subject matter. I put this one barely above the honorable mention because I felt the photo was more attention grabbing!"

Honorable Mention: Pekin Daily Times, Danielle Homerin. School District Enrollment Comparisons.

Division E

1st Place: The Daily Journal, Kankakee, Dave Dressler and Mike Frey. Chicago Crime. "Perfect example of a great info graphic, the graphic tells most of the story. This one is eye-catching and very informational without much additional reading."

2nd Place: The Telegraph, Alton, Alex Heeb. Protection or problem? Levee heights spark debate. "I was just reading an article about this topic this morning and how several states are suing the Army Corps of Engineers for overbuilding levees. This info graphic does a terrific job to what extent that was done along the Mississippi River in Illinois."

3rd Place: Quincy Herald-Whig, Ben Levin. Been There, Done That. "Very good graphic on health. Easy to understand and visually appealing."

Honorable Mention: The Herald-News, Joliet, Scott Helmchen. Stirring a call for help. "An important subject to address. Fairly basic, but made information easy to comprehend."

Division F

1st Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Michael Anthony Noel. Fighting in the SPHL. "Very, very eye-catching. There was obviously an issue with fighting in 2015-2016 and this graphic displays that it got better in 2016-2017."

2nd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Michael Anthony Noel. Caterpillar's Future Home: Deerfield. "I'm sure this is a hot topic in this community and the graphic draws attention to the story nicely!"

3rd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Michael Anthony Noel. Shark tooth. "Very nicely done!"

Honorable Mention: Chicago Tribune Media Group, Chad Yoder. Chicagoland's Water System.

CLASS 23 - SINGLE PAGE DESIGN

Division A

1st Place: The Navigator & Journal-Register, Albion, Pat Seil. March 8 Navigator Front Page. "Easily the contest winner. Excellent use of color. Great flag design. Great use of white space. Dominate photo yet page balance with photo placement. Nice to keep boxed text in single column to visually set it apart from the rest of the page. Keep up the good work."

2nd Place: Plano Record, Julie Beaulieu. Property tax bill time is here again. "Clear, concise and on target! Great way to put taxes into context. Clean layout (easy to follow). Nice graphics. This is a solid contest entry!"

3rd Place: Lebanon Advertiser, David Porter. Eclipse. "This is nice in many respects. Clean. Simple. You must be printing your label information directly on the page (rather than attaching a label) which surely explains the corner cutout. Great idea to inverse print text above the flag. This design works!"

Honorable Mention: The Harrisburg Register, Michael Dann. "Reason to smile." "Much to like here. The highlight shadow behind text in photo, however, looks like a poor print job rather than a design effect."

Division B

1st Place: Lake County Journal, Grayslake, Jes Spivak, Jui Sadekar. Meet and Greet. "The way they set up the photo is really incredible, almost as if the meat is on the page. In addition to that it isn't noisy and is easy to follow."

2nd Place: Kendall County Record, Yorkville, Julie Beaulieu. No 'Shhhh' necessary. "Very clean and organized. The theater photo offers depth to the page."

3rd Place: Kendall County Record, Yorkville, Julie Beaulieu. The lure of the grape. "The image on this page is inviting, the font is creative but still easy to read and the white space is used while still being opened up."

Honorable Mention: The Journal-News, Hillsboro, Mike Plunkett. Stamp Out Cancer. "I wanted to make this an honorable mention because the work that must have gone into this layout, the creative design and the use of space without a cramped feel deserves to be recognized."

Division C

1st Place: Wednesday Journal Group, Oak Park, Javier Govea. Maywood's Role in the Great Wars. "Great layout and seamless transition between pages. Really nice work."

2nd Place: Kane County Chronicle, St. Charles, Jes Spivak. Hyper-local. "Great photography and interesting typography (overlap with photo)."

3rd Place: Suburban Life Core Group, Jes Spivak. Christmas favorite. "Very effective use of negative space."

Division D

1st Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Staff. Everything is getting black. "A dominant compelling image and typography make me want to read this story. The pullout numbers at the bottom also provide points of entry for readers to learn more."

2nd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Mike Solley. Eclectic al fresco. "A great use of white space allows the colors and patterns in the photos to pop."

3rd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Mike Solley. Going dark. "Enjoyed the typography around the eclipse on black and the background makes the color photos more vibrant."

Honorable Mention: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Mike Solley. Creative ways to keep a journal. "A solid design with clean lines and spots of color make this a fun easy read."

Division E

1st Place: The Daily Journal, Kankakee, Dave Dressler, Allison Shapiro, Mary Hall & Rachael Soucie. Hardcore Haunts. "This page is informative and captivating, with a good photo to draw you in (if it doesn't scare you too much). The handprint is a nice touch jumping out of the frame, but the dripping blood at the top of the page shows great attention to detail."

2nd Place: Sauk Valley Media, Sterling, Rusty Schrader. Time For a Reality Chick. "Great use of visuals, taking a simple page and really drawing readers to each item. With all of those visuals, there's a balance to the page that makes for an informative news front."

3rd Place: Quincy Herald-Whig, Cody Bozarth. Act the fool. "The varying legs of type really make this page. Quirky and entertaining, as a Weekend page should be."

Honorable Mention: Herald & Review, Decatur, Staff. Herald & Review. "Graphics really convey a significant amount of key information."

Division F

1st Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Katie Gaston. Cue. "The designer's approach is unexpected and eye-catching in a way that doesn't seem forced. The use of typography really makes a one-word headline pop. Three well-selected images, all very different from each other, enhance the storytelling."

2nd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Katie Gaston. America First. "A well-chosen image and strong typography combine with other clean, simple design elements (bold words, spot color, reverse type) for an elegant page."

3rd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Shannon Countryman. #PJStar Preps. "Strong photo selection here. An original approach to the high school football scoreboard display. It's clean and eye-catching."

Honorable Mention: Journal Star, Peoria, Shannon Countryman. Cubbie Blues. "Great headline and a well-chosen photo capture the somber mood in the dugout (and probably Cubs fans everywhere that night)."

CLASS 24 - NEWSPAPER DESIGN

Division A

1st Place: The Navigator & Journal-Register, Albion, Staff. Navigator Newspaper Design. "Classy looking publication, well organized and uses color well. Particularly liked the standing elements of the paper."

2nd Place: Forest Park Review, Staff. Forest Park Review Newspaper Design. "Well organized with good use of typography. Loved the Design an ad section."

3rd Place: Mahomet Citizen, George Dobrik, JJ Lockwood, Dave Burluson. Mahomet Citizen. "Functional newspaper with a strong front page."

Honorable Mention: The Lexingtonian, Laurie Sleeter. The Lexingtonian -- part time job, full time layout joy. "Well structured newspaper."

Division B

1st Place: The Galena Gazette, Staff. Newspaper design. "Good design with nice use of photos and type throughout. The May 3 section focused on the medical center was very well done. Really nice headline treatments."

2nd Place: Bureau County Republican, Princeton, Staff. March 25, 2017, and Sept. 13, 2017. "Clean, consistent design. Good use of photos and breaker heads within story layouts."

3rd Place: Wednesday Journal of Oak Park & River Forest, Claire Innes. Wednesday Journal Newspaper Design. "Easy-to-navigate, engaging layout."

Honorable Mention: Morris Herald-News, Staff. Morris Herald-News newspaper design.

Division C

1st Place: Suburban Life Core Group, Staff. Suburban Life Core Group. "This was a VERY close competition! This one was first because of the great photos and layout that invite you in to take a closer look!"

2nd Place: Kane County Chronicle, St. Charles, Staff. Kane County Chronicle newspaper design.

Division D

1st Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Staff. Register-Mail Overall Design. "Very clean design across the entire edition. Opioid cover is tremendous. Good use of negative space and it works on the all black. Smart typeface/design decisions made on that front to assure the white type holds. All section fronts are clean. Both editions are very clean and cohesive. A well-designed paper from start to finish."

2nd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Staff. Daily Chronicle newspaper design. "I like both of these editions. Well-designed and not overwhelmingly crowded section fronts. Strong art to anchor clean sports fronts. Nice job presenting other pieces (polls, weather). Section is very cohesive and flows quite well."

3rd Place: Chicago Daily Law Bulletin, Staff. Chicago Daily Law Bulletin. "Obviously a huge amount of information in each edition and for someone in the industry, this must be a can't-miss. I like the 'In the News' box and the reverse teaser under the masthead is interesting. Pretty clean and concise for how much content is in there."

Honorable Mention: Journal Gazette & Times-Courier, Mattoon, Staff. Mattoon JG-TC newspaper design. "Clean designs, very block oriented editions which make the pages easy to read and the editions easy to follow. On some pages I wish there was a little less type and more art."

Division E

1st Place: Quincy Herald-Whig, Staff. Quincy Herald-Whig. "Layout, info graphics, photo use are all top notch. Consistently good design throughout."

2nd Place: The Southern Illinoisan, Carbondale, Staff. The Southern Illinoisan. "Photo-driven design is effective. Some of it is interspersed with blocks of grey pages that knock the shine off that work. Issue covering eclipse is impressive."

3rd Place: Herald & Review, Decatur, Staff. Herald & Review. "Solid broadsheet. Typography used well. Took some chances with color and with graphic design that are worthy of note. Overall, journeyman design work. Push to find master level."

Honorable Mention: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Staff. Northwest Herald newspaper design. "Big tab, struggles to use the constraint of the square page effectively. Sports cover makes bold use of photography. Paper is colorful overall."

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Staff. Chicago Sun-Times design -- 2 full editions. "Great photos, layout, use of color. Everything really works together and pulls the reader in!"

2nd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Staff. Journal Star.

CLASS 25 - HEADLINE WRITING

Division A

1st Place: Ford County Record, Paxton, Andrew Rosten. Medaling kids; Four old times; Zen fans 11; Let's win two; six-cess. "Witty, charming headlines ... really enjoy Medaling kids ... well done."

2nd Place: Ford County Record, Paxton, Andrew Rosten. State-ment; spirit soar; splitsville; nine is nice; six-cess; dandy dozen. "Well done."

3rd Place: Mahomet Citizen, Dave Burleson. They rule the roost. "The river mild was the kicker for me."

Honorable Mention: Hancock County Journal-Pilot, Carthage, Ethan Lillard. Witty headlines. "Really liked Cain was able ... very nice draw into the story."

Division B

1st Place: The Galena Gazette, Jay Dickerson. Headline writing. "Great headlines that tie in perfectly to the stories. Wonderful word play. Overall, this category had a strong field of contestants. Well done."

2nd Place: The Reporter, Hickory Hills, Jeff Vorva. Five Sports Headlines. "Witty, enticing headline writing."

3rd Place: The Hinsdalean, Ken Knutson. Headline writing. "Solid headline writing that makes you think — and smile."

Honorable Mention: Lake County Journal, Grayslake, Joe Zenkel. Light Bright, New Life for Old Soles, Smashing Pumpkins, Union Break, Welcome to Dodge City. "Nice use of familiar but not overused phrases."

Division C

1st Place: Suburban Life Core Group, Joe Zenkel. SaxyFeverishLightsShoehornedEggs. "Well done. Several superior heads highlight a good group of them."

2nd Place: Suburban Life Core Group, Jes Spivak. LightAglowLostWorldReelingDoughinFeast. "Good mix of creative headlines, particularly with the limitations of the cover. Feast Your Eyes was my favorite."

3rd Place: Suburban Life Core Group, Joe Zenkel. ShearLimboFootSizzlinSpin. "Go For A Spin and Fleet of Foot were the best of the batch."

Honorable Mention: Kane County Chronicle, St. Charles, Jes Spivak. Adventure awaits, I spy a bird, Berry Explosion, Geneva church supports soles, A grand performance. "Geneva church supports soles was excellent. Good play on words."

Division D

1st Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, James Wilson. Dash for TIF cash, Discord wafts in, Goodbye, Ruby Tuesday, Undimmed Energy, Pale Shadows. "The Daily Chronicle offers strong headlines with rare verbs (Discord wafts in) whimsical ones (Goodbye, Ruby Tuesday) and some with good imagery (Undimmed Energy, Pale Shadows). These heads do their job--of enticing the reader to begin the story."

2nd Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Rob Buck. Rob Buck Headlines. "Rob Buck of the Register-Mail provides a good mix of headlines that should have drawn readers to the stories. Budget answers blowing in the wind, Pegasus spreads its wings and Downtown council kicks butts are especially good."

3rd Place: Breeze-Courier, Taylorville, Owen Lasswell. Headlines by Owen Lasswell. "Owen Lasswell likes alliteration in his headlines, and uses it in most of these entries.. Some verbs would make his heads stronger."

Honorable Mention: Breeze-Courier, Taylorville, Kim Paisley. Headlines by Kim Paisley. "Kim Paisley had an interesting mix of headlines. Iron Sharpens Iron is her best. Strong verbs would have helped."

Division E

1st Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Jami Kunzer. The Horror Host of It All, Furry Weather Friend, Lurch into Halloween, Key influence, Leap of faith. "Writer makes good play on words--Furry Weather Friend; good verb choice--Lurch into Halloween; plus some familiar terms--Key Influence and Leap of Faith."

2nd Place: Sauk Valley Media, Sterling, Rusty Schrader. Wheel Estate Developer. "Rusty Schrader has fun with headlines--Wheel estate developer; Time for a reality chick; City coming to its Sensus; Something in Commons."

3rd Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Rachel Wisinski. Airport plans in the air, Creating a buzz, Uncharted waters, Metal man, Forging their craft. "Good variety of heads that attract attention. Some would be stronger with some active verbs."

Division F

1st Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Dean Muellerleile. Dean Muellerleile. "Dean Muellerleile of the Peoria Journal Star shows a sense of humor in his clever headlines (Feline Navidad, Linkin' Abe and Vanna a tall order; and Big cats got your tongues wagging), as well as telling the whole story in a few words: Carthage radio station WCAZ-AM to end storied 75-year run Sunday."

2nd Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Paul Saltzman. A selection of 5 headlines by Paul Saltzman. "Paul Saltzman of the Chicago Sun-Times can tease you (How Chicago gets its guns; and Hunting for dinosaurs t the bottom of the world) or tell you whole story (Skokie couple, married 64 years, die minutes apart, holding hands."

3rd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Shannon Countryman. Shannon Countryman Headlines. "Shannon Countryman of the Peoria Journal Star entices readers of news stories with heads like

Overflow idea holds water; Renters give old cooperage a shot; and Butternut plan could rise again."

Honorable Mention: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Don Friske. Don Friske Headlines. "Don Friske of the Daily Herald does a good job of enlivening sports stories with such heads as Stomach Turner; Spring in their steps; and Such a striking figure., plus Kicked to the curb and Just a cold reality."

CLASS 26 - SPORTS SECTION

Division A

1st Place: Ford County Record, Paxton, Andrew Rosten. Feb. 15, 2017. "WOW! Talk about blowing away the competition. Great art, nice breakouts, unbelievable space (I'm jealous). It doesn't get much better than this."

2nd Place: Mahomet Citizen, Staff. Mahomet Citizen. "Nice use of color and space. Well designed section. Good breakout elements."

3rd Place: Cass County Star-Gazette, Beardstown, Don Chipman. Cass County Star-Gazette Sports Section. "Pages pop with big, good photos and headlines."

Honorable Mention: Hancock County Journal-Pilot, Carthage, Ethan Lillard. Hancock County sports. "You should take pride in producing a solid section like this with a one-man staff."

Division B

1st Place: Des Plaines Journal, Staff. Journal & Topics Sports. "Nice layout, good coverage of numerous sports, and interesting editorials/special interest."

2nd Place: Bureau County Republican, Princeton, Kevin Hieronymus. Sports section, Bureau County Republican. "Really comprehensive sports coverage including athlete profiles. Some minor formatting issues with paragraphs."

3rd Place: Wednesday Journal of Oak Park & River Forest, Marty Farmer. Mistake-prone Friars lose to Montini. "Good photography. This also includes the Year In Review for consideration of 'Best Sports Section.'"

Honorable Mention: Rantoul Press, Zack Carpenter. Best Sports Section Division B. "Good photography and headline writing."

Division C

1st Place: Kane County Chronicle, St. Charles, Staff. Kane County Chronicle Sports. "Great coverage, photos, layout! Loved everything about this section!"

2nd Place: Suburban Life Core Group, Staff. Suburban Life Core Group sports section.

Division D

1st Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Mike Trueblood, Matthew Wheaton, Jackson White. Register-Mail Sports Section. "Extremely well-organized section. Easy to find and easy to read. Good use of art. Nice local angles."

2nd Place: Effingham Daily News, Staff. Effingham Daily News sports section. "Local art really pops. Good design makes pages flow nicely."

3rd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Staff. Daily Chronicle best sports section. "Very good photography used effectively."

Honorable Mention: The Commercial-News, Danville, Chad Dare, Marvin Holman. Sports section entry. "Good use of photos to emphasize local coverage."

Division E

1st Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Matt Daniels and staff. The News-Gazette. "The depth of writing and detail carry the section. The calendar of local athletes is a unique touch, and simply great. There is a wealth of information that didn't wilt on the pages."

2nd Place: Sauk Valley Media, Sterling, Staff. Sports Sections. "A real contender for the top spot, this section also had some very good writing. Top of 2 is a destination and the infoboxes were a nice accent. Plenty of quick info in the football preview."

3rd Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Staff. Northwest Herald sports. "Well-written section offered a great deal of information. At times, art gets lost on the smaller pages. The 'sideline view' boxes are very well done and add a lot to the coverage."

Honorable Mention: Quincy Herald-Whig, Staff. Herald-Whig sports section. "A clean section that provided a complete look at sports. Soccer found its way to the cover during football season and pennant races. Recreational basketball found a place on a holiday weekend. Well done."

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Tribune Media Group, Staff. Chicago Tribune sports sections: Sept. 11 and January 29, 2017. "Beautiful sports pages, tons of coverage on a multitude of sports! Lots of stats! Great photos and layout!"

2nd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Staff. Journal Star Sports Section. "Very good job, great coverage."

CLASS 27 - LIFESTYLE SECTION

Division B

1st Place: Kendall County Record, Yorkville, Staff. Countywide.

2nd Place: Mahomet Citizen, Staff. Mahomet Citizen.

3rd Place: The Galena Gazette, Staff. Lifestyle section.

Honorable Mention: The Hinsdalean, Staff. Issues of May 18 & Dec. 14.

Division C

1st Place: Kane County Chronicle, St. Charles, Renee Tomell. Kane County Chronicle Lifestyle Section. "Attractive layout, cover was eye-catching. Good use of local content and contributors, good mix of content."

2nd Place: Suburban Life Core Group, Staff. Suburban Life Core Group Weekend Life. "Cover photo for May 19 blocked portions of masthead. Would have preferred to have more local content as opposed to syndicated features."

Division D

1st Place: Journal Gazette & Times-Courier, Mattoon, Staff. JG-TC Lifestyles section. "Nice section overall with a beautiful front page."

2nd Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Robyn Gautschy, Staff. Register-Mail Out & About.

Division E

1st Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Staff. The News-Gazette. "This was by far the best-written section. I like it when a feature section understands that it can really make an impact on the reader."

2nd Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Jami Kunzer. Pl@y. "A great section. Loved the flow of it. Probably will 'steal' a few of these ideas. Fun to read."

3rd Place: Sauk Valley Media, Sterling, Lucas Pauley. Plan!t Sauk Valley. "Good solid section, although some of the events pages are a little gray. Some very good writing."

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Miriam DiNunzio. 2 editions of Well, a weekly section on health/fitness. "Even in a health/fitness section, there is a wide variety of topics. These stories span across age groups as well. These sections contain multiple voices, including citizens and professionals. A good blend of content."

2nd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Thomas Bruch. Lifestyles section. "This section offers readers a variety of articles and information. Readers are getting local and national coverage of art and culture news. These sections include very interesting topics. Layout, design and photography is well done."

CLASS 28 - SPECIAL SECTION

Division A

1st Place: The Leader, St. Joseph, Staff. Memories to last a life time. "LOVE! Super photos and baby section is great!!"

2nd Place: The Fulton Democrat, Lewistown, Staff. Farm Pages 102517. "Nice very readable."

3rd Place: Mahomet Citizen, Staff. Guide to Mahomet. "Nice but front page too faint."

Honorable Mention: Ford County Record, Paxton, Andrew Rosten. State champs.

Division B

1st Place: Wednesday Journal of Oak Park & River Forest, Staff. Community of Caring. "Good coverage of topics that are not easy to cover, combined with resources to help those specific issues. Good layout; ad placement corresponded with the topic features as well."

2nd Place: The Galena Gazette, Staff. Galena EMS. "Good overview of the history/creation of the local EMS service. Good incorporation of file stories and photos during the 40 year span. Profiles of workers/volunteers well-written and interesting. An important cut-line about the significance of the 'red box' was omitted but the information was included in an article further in the section so it finally made sense."

3rd Place: Des Plaines Journal, Staff. The Wall That Heals - A Special Section. "Good overview of the planning and personnel involved in the exhibit. Inclusion of the history behind the Vietnam War and photos of local soldiers that died during the conflict rounded out the coverage nicely."

Honorable Mention: The Journal-News, Hillsboro, Jordyn Smith. 10 Under 40. "Every feature was well-written and compelling. Photos well-composed, showing the subject in their work environment. The simple layout and cover graphic was the only issue that kept this entry from receiving a higher placement."

Division C

1st Place: Suburban Life Core Group, Staff. Touchdown 2017. "Awesome photos."

2nd Place: Wednesday Journal Group, Oak Park, Michael Romain, Javier Govea. Maywood Community Guide. "Nice graphics."

3rd Place: Jersey County Journal, Jerseyville, Staff. Downtown Country Christmas.

Honorable Mention: The MidWeek, DeKalb, Inger Koch, Dana Herra, Mike Solley. The MidWeek 50th Anniversary.

Division D

1st Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Staff. Presidential Connections. "This was a fascinating topic, and the content was well done and well organized. It was also the best designed section in this category. It's easy to see how the Plus section would be of interest to readers."

2nd Place: Chicago Daily Law Bulletin, Staff. 59th annual Law Day special supplement. "This was a visually appealing magazine and well-organized. The content surprised me -- I expected dense legal jargon but was pleasantly surprised that the stories had appeal to a much wider audience and were topics that seemed to have broader readership."

3rd Place: Effingham Daily News, Staff. Championship Season. "Lovely cover on an obvious keepsake edition that readers will love. Good photography throughout, nice wrap-ups to a championship season, and a very nice double-truck design."

Honorable Mention: Breeze-Courier, Taylorville, Marylee Rasar. Breeze-Courier Christmas Section. "Extensive effort in a pre-Christmas themed section that seemed to go on and on. The amount of time to write and produce this section must have been extensive, but there's a lot here that readers must love."

Division E

1st Place: Quincy Herald-Whig, Staff. Fall Farm and Field. "Clean design, good use of photos, strong content."

2nd Place: Herald & Review, Decatur, Staff. "Final Round." "Clean, simple design and attractive cover. Good job getting lots of voices from your community inside."

3rd Place: Quincy Herald-Whig, Staff. Heroes. "Love the superhero theme -- appropriate and colorful. Creative concept with the photos. Nice copy block for each honoree."

Honorable Mention: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Staff. IlliniHQ Football Yearbook. "Nice layout and design, engaging photos, strong content."

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Stefano Esposito. Illinois 200' bicentennial special section. "This is one of those newspaper sections you just know is going to be kept in the desk drawers, boxes, attics of your readers. Such a beautiful keepsake of 200 years of Illinois history. It highlights the good, the bad, the corrupt, so there was no shying away from tough parts of the history. Organization of topics was superb. Visually, it is truly stunning."

2nd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Staff. Kickoff. "People love their football, and this did not disappoint as a season preview. Innovative content ideas, especially the '4 Downs With' profiles that were so much easier to access for readers than straight narrative would have been. Also a lot of visual appeal."

3rd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Staff. Art and Soul. "The cover was gorgeous, the quotes pages were equally stunning visually. This section lifted up the arts, which is nice to see in a society that often doesn't do that. While the content was original, the pages felt visually repetitive, with similar designs."

Honorable Mention: Journal Star, Peoria, Staff. On the Move. "Did not think a section about transportation would be interesting, but you surprised me! And of course, in a society that's always on the move, this content was superbly thought through and of ultimate importance to readers."

CLASS 29 - BEST WEBSITE

Division B

1st Place: Cook County Chronicle, Chicago, Staff. Cook County Chronicle Website. "Very comprehensive and easy to navigate."

2nd Place: Morris Herald-News, Ryan Glab, John Sahly, Ben Draper. Best Website. "A little clunk when loading, and the name of the paper should be much larger at the top of the page. The use of white space and large images helps declutter the page and I like the feature that allows folks to share their comment to Facebook."

3rd Place: The Journal-News, Hillsboro, Staff. Best Website. "A good news website; well organized. Larger images would really make the site pop. The link to the blog was broken."

Division D

1st Place: Journal Gazette & Times-Courier, Mattoon, Staff. Mattoon JG-TC website. "This site used a different template than the others in this category, and I felt like it really stood out as the best. I compared the main page, obituaries, and letters to the other sites."

2nd Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Jay Redfern. Galesburg.com. "This site used a similar template that another site in this category used. I compared the main page, obituaries, and letters to the other sites. I really liked the use of Instagram to share sports photographs."

3rd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Ryan Glab, John Sahly, Ben Draper. Best Website.

Honorable Mention: The Journal-Standard, Freeport, Staff. journalstandard.com.

Division E

1st Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Staff. The News-Gazette. "Seriffed body text appreciated! Wide variety of features all across front page. Section pages simple; good incorporation of team logos for prep sports. Instagram widget seems excessive. Glut of sections on front page means mobile view is looooooong; hope readers are able to find specific stories easy? With podcasts, good mix of options for playing on page or subscribing. The drop down that gets revealed on a page scroll is kind of wasteful; would rather see that be navigation, not social buttons. Bottom ad on story pages takes up lot of real estate."

2nd Place: Herald & Review, Decatur, Staff. Herald & Review website. "Nice touch having social sites in the pancake menu. Good navigation. Subscription popups are annoying. OUTSTANDING USE of longform to accommodate sliding then and now photos — I would have put the glut of photos at the bottom in a slideshow, but that's just me. Didn't have UN/PW for online edition. Outstanding font selection that increased readability on digital screens."

3rd Place: Rockford Register Star, Staff. rrstar.com. "Lot of sections on the front page to scroll through. Good to have options, but while that works well for desktop, the scroll on mobile feels

like forever. There's a lot of story redundancy in the first few sections, too. I'm OK with duplicates after a couple scrolls, but these are too close. Love the serif body text font for readability, especially on mobile. Good longform page presentation. Good use of tables by city reporter. Pancake navigation has a lot of options, on mobile they are a mite bit small."

Honorable Mention: NewsTribune, La Salle, Staff. newstrib.com. "Friends Follow Facebook window at bottom of every page is a bit unclear and not sure why it deserves that play, but Facebook/Twitter combo feed window is awesome and earns its spot. Hassle your features editor for using an image of VHS cassettes for staff entertainment pics. I'm biased against TownNews' two navigation bars on the home page. Good design style, loaded well. Mobile just as good. Didn't have UN/PW for online edition."

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Staff. chicago.suntimes.com — the Chicago Sun-Times' website. "Kudos on the redesign. Excellent website."

2nd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Staff. pjstar.com.

3rd Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Staff. The Daily Herald Online.

Honorable Mention: Belleville News-Democrat, Staff. BND.com best website.

CLASS 30 - BEST WEB PROJECT

Division D

1st Place: Breeze-Courier, Taylorville, Owen Lasswell, Robert Fagg. Top Play Tuesday. "Great job! Love how this project was interactive and how it brings young people to the newspapers websites and involves them in a way that's memorable!"

2nd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, John Sahly. Best Web Project. "Good project that I can certainly see the benefit for the newspaper and for the spectators coming in to watch the games!"

3rd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Eddie Carifio, Jesse Severson, Dan Mott. DC Preps 360: Pole vault with Kaneland's Danny Walker. "This was still a strong entry, didn't place as well because of the mass appeal that I could see in the other entries that placed higher."

Division E

1st Place: Herald & Review, Decatur, Staff. "Still Standing." "Great use of photos and video for that explainer: Readers probably got a LOT of value out of that. Please tell me you posted that

directly to your socials! Excellent use of longform for first story, and the positioning of all the related links is perfect."

2nd Place: Quincy Herald-Whig, Staff. Lovelace trial, part 2. "Impressive, thorough coverage. Got cameras in the courtroom, and made it worth the effort. Main Lovelace page has a lot of duplicate headshots. Good use of Twitter for live blogging."

3rd Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Jeff D'Alessio. U of I turns 150. "Impressive amount of community involvement, here. Lot of work went into these stories."

Honorable Mention: Quincy Herald-Whig, Matt Dutton, Kelly Wilson. St. Mary Hospital memories. "Great effort to go get memories. Good use of online resources."

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Mick Dumke, Joe DeCeault. 'How Chicago gets its guns,' **ProPublica Illinois / Chicago Sun-Times / WBEZ-FM.** "I think they did a good job trying to tackle a very timely, important and big issue going on in Chicago, as well as other areas of the country."

2nd Place: The Dispatch & The Rock Island Argus, Anthony Watt; Todd Mizener. Mothers' Day without mom. "I think it is very important to highlight the results of peoples actions concerning crime. It feels to me that the victims of these crimes are more important than the criminals doing these things, but their voices are often not heard and brushed aside."

3rd Place: Chicago Tribune Media Group, Staff. Baseball food guide. "This is a fun and very informative guide to food at Wrigley. I can tell a good amount of work went into this and it shows. I especially like the fact they gave the prices and the sections where this food is available. Those two items are indeed helpful."

Honorable Mention: Journal Star, Peoria, Staff. Journal Star podcasts. "With all the work that went into this, it doesn't quite feel as though it is a web project, as much as it is a web solution for doing things online. I do think it is a great use of online resources rather than just copying/pasting what was in the print edition to a website."

CLASS 31 - MOST INNOVATIVE PROJECT

Division B

1st Place: The Galena Gazette, Hillary Dickerson, Carter Newton. Coming to Galena: Stories of Immigration. "This project demonstrates a forsaken privilege of how great America is and why people from all walks of international life want to come here. Enriching and wonderful."

2nd Place: The Galena Gazette, Staff. Galena EMS. "This is a nice commemorative piece, but, most importantly, it shows why longstanding EMS relations are needed in a community and why they should be valued."

3rd Place: The Hinsdalean, Pamela Lannom, Jim Slonoff & Ken Knutson. Hinsdale ... "This is a project that goes where few publications have gone before: What is life like in a town that has my same namesake? A refreshing series."

Honorable Mention: Oakland Independent, Janice Hunt. Fresh Look at an Old Town' youth photo contest. "This is wholly original and interactive. These young photographers show great skill and a new perspective on what their community looks like to them. Encourage a young person's creative, you may be surprised!"

Division E

1st Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Jeff D'Alessio. UI turns 150. "Incredibly ambitious package that seems to define the word 'innovative.' How appropriate that it has taken on a life of its own. It's an inspiring lesson in the ways a newspaper can conjure a social media presence with an end run around Facebook and Co. More detail on how much of the company's resources were devoted to this project over time would have been illuminating."

2nd Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Jim Rossow. Snapchat takeover via High School Confidential. "A laudable effort to engage young readers (and share in their creativity) and boost online viewership. The key will be devoting resources to this effort and sustaining it over time, while staying cognizant of the social media platforms that young people actually use. Shoehorning all of the schools onto a print news page seems a tight squeeze; it might be worthwhile, if possible, to devote more real estate in the paper to these kids going forward."

3rd Place: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Staff. Flourishing Elsewhere: Why they left. "Praiseworthy look at a problem everybody talks about but nobody seems to know how to fix. Articulates very well the big city's lure and variety vs. a small town's charm and affordability. The sample seemed a bit small for the scope of the issue, with perhaps an overemphasis on the web as the possible salvation for the Galesburgs of the world. The diversity of the participants was a plus."

Honorable Mention: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Staff. The Great Merge. "This seems like a valiant, all-out effort to spread the word about the integration of the company's media holdings, and make readers care about it. At the same time, seems a bit 'inside-baseball' to the average reader."

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Stefano Esposito, Chicago Sun-Times. Illinois 200' bicentennial special section. "Really an amazing read and presentation. It's consistent, well-thought out and engaging."

2nd Place: Chicago Tribune Media Group, Staff. The tax divide. "This was a terrific piece. It mixed multimedia well and integrating nicely into the story. It's tough to make tax stories interesting, relevant and easy to follow. The layers in this accomplished that nicely. Good job."

3rd Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Kelly Vold, staff. The Daily Herald's Facebook Newspaper.

CLASS 32 - Illinois Public Policy Institute Award for BEST PROMOTION OF PUBLIC'S RIGHT TO KNOW

Division A

1st Place: Elk Grove Journal, Tom Robb. Uncovered School Board Emails Lead To AG OMA Investigation.

2nd Place: Oakland Independent, Janice Hunt. President, superintendent admit violating Open Meetings Act.

3rd Place: Ford County Record, Paxton, Will Brumleve. \$1M in bills incurred challenging appeal.

Honorable Mention: The Navigator & Journal-Register, Albion, T.J. Hug. West Salem Illegal Executive Session Story.

Division D

1st Place: The Galena Gazette, Carter Newton, Hillary Dickerson. Open government.

2nd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Drew Zimmerman. Daily Chronicle – NIU College of Law Dean Sexual Harassment.

3rd Place: Breeze-Courier, Taylorville, Mike Frazier. An Examination of Christian County Township budgets.

Honorable Mention: The Register-Mail, Galesburg, Rebecca Susmarski. Complaints revealed against HR head.

Division E

1st Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Jordan Wilson. Crystal Lake firefighters FOIA. "Great reporting. This story was revealed because of the newspaper. And it was the public's right to know of the conduct of these city employees. Well done."

2nd Place: Northwest Herald, Crystal Lake, Hannah Prokop, Brett Rowland . Lake in the Hills administrator leave. "So often the public hears that someone has resigned for personal reasons. Government owes its residents better than that. Thanks to the paper, they got it."

3rd Place: The Herald-News, Joliet, Felix Sarver and Jon Styf. Coroner's Report. "It was as much the editorial as the story that made this one of the top picks. Always a good policy to let the readers know why those documents belong to them."

Honorable Mention: The Southern Illinoisan, Carbondale, Molly Parker, Isaac Smith. Cairo Public Utility Company. "This story was a contender for first place, but the writing needed to be more precise."

CLASS 33 - PUBLIC NOTICE JOURNALISM AWARD

Open Division

1st Place: Ford County Record, Paxton, Will Brumleve. Invalid contract' forces do-over of bid process. "Very well written and obviously the interests of the public was held in high regards when looking at and resolving this issue and addressed solutions given where it would not happen again."

2nd Place: Belleville News-Democrat, Kara Berg. Are you eligible for a chunk of a \$4.2 million Granite City coke plant settlement? "I like the use of graphics to illustrate those who lived in the area in question."

3rd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Drew Zimmerman. Developer plans luxury apartments. "Living in a community that's had multiple developments similar to this, it was nice to read about and I think it was a good note that the buildings being torn down were in rough shape."

CLASS 34 - BEST SCHOOL BOARD COVERAGE

Division A

1st Place: Coal City Courant, Staff. Coal City School District Unit 1. "The reporter did a terrific job of explaining the school district's finances, and bringing the numbers alive with excellent writing and illustrations."

2nd Place: Ford County Record, Paxton, Will Brumleve. Paxton-Buckley-Loda school board. "Well-written series of stories not only provides the school district's budget numbers, but explains them in plain language. Nice job of reporting!"

3rd Place: Niles Journal, Tom Robb, Dion Martorano. Was Coach K Pushed Out. "Good, objective reporting on a touchy subject. The stories provide some considerable depth of understanding."

Honorable Mention: Mahomet Citizen, Fred Kroner. Mahomet-Seymour school board. "Provides good, basic coverage of school board meetings and issues."

Division B

1st Place: The Galena Gazette, Hillary Dickerson . Galena School Board coverage.

2nd Place: The News Leader, Highland, Megan Braa, Curt Libbra. No state budget would mean no school in Highland after Christmas.

3rd Place: The Galena Gazette, Dan Burke. East Dubuque School Board.

Honorable Mention: The Journal-News, Hillsboro, Mary (Galer) Herschelman. Litchfield Board Asks For Increase In Levy.

Division C

1st Place: Kane County Chronicle, St. Charles, Martha Quetsch. Coverage of St. Charles School District 303 Board. "Very thorough. Did a good job of explaining both sides of issues and finding comments from both the district and the general public."

2nd Place: Kane County Chronicle, St. Charles, Chris Walker . Kaneland School District 302 Board coverage. "Did a good job of capturing opposing views and explaining both sides views in relation to the issue being discussed."

Division D

1st Place: Breeze-Courier, Taylorville, Owen Lasswell. Taylorville School referendum coverage. "Very good coverage of local governance and how it relates to the school district. Thorough and continuous from the onset to the conclusion. Also, an interesting take to conclude the series by moving from the local issue to the state issue. Well done."

2nd Place: Pekin Daily Times, Sharon Woods Harris. PCHS levels playing field for all athletes. "Very interesting story that I don't think many people would have picked up on if the reporter

had not developed the story angle. Creative and clearly a local issue of significance for the district."

Division F

1st Place: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Nicole Lafond. Nicole Lafond. "The 'Fighting Back' piece is excellent, as is the superintendent profile. Great work bringing ed issues to the community. This contest is full of great ed writing work. Final decisions were based on on contest criteria: contribution to public understanding of local school governance and support for effective dialogue that helps the community and school board define major public policy issues ... and especially this year enterprise, depth of reporting, and clarity of writing."

2nd Place: Journal Star, Peoria, Pam Adams. Pam Adams - Best School Board Coverafe. "All great pieces, bringing ed issues to the community. This contest is full of great ed writing work. Final decisions were based on on contest criteria: contribution to public understanding of local school governance and support for effective dialogue that helps the community and school board define major public policy issues ... and especially this year enterprise, depth of reporting, and clarity of writing."

3rd Place: The State Journal-Register, Springfield, Jason Nevel . Jason Nevel school board coverage. "These pieces get to the heart of reporting on school governance matters on important education issues issues. This contest is full of great ed writing work. Final decisions were based on on contest criteria: contribution to public understanding of local school governance and support for effective dialogue that helps the community and school board define major public policy issues ... and especially this year enterprise, depth of reporting, and clarity of writing."

Honorable Mention: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Debra Pressey. Debra Pressey. "The 'Healing Process' piece sets this entry apart. Well done. This contest is full of great ed writing work. Final decisions were based on on contest criteria: contribution to public understanding of local school governance and support for effective dialogue that helps the community and school board define major public policy issues ... and especially this year enterprise, depth of reporting, and clarity of writing."

CLASS 35 - BEST COVERAGE OF TAXATION

Division B

1st Place: The Galena Gazette, Hillary Dickerson. Galena school referendum. "Included an all-encompassing view on the issue of raising taxes."

2nd Place: The News Leader, Highland, Megan Braa, Curt Libbra. Highland's 'blight' designation allows city to levy new sales tax. "This entry showed the importance of a trigger term like 'blight' bringing a change to the tax base."

3rd Place: The Journal-News, Hillsboro, Mary (Galer) Herschelman. Litchfield Board Asks For Increase In Levy. "A cohesive piece."

Honorable Mention: Ford County Record, Paxton, Will Brumleve. Ford County Record coverage of taxation. "A good selection of stories about tax issues between school and municipal jurisdictions."

Division E

1st Place: The State Journal-Register, Springfield, Mary Hansen, Tim Landis, Crystal Thomas. City of Springfield and TIF. "The stories about the TIFs are terrific, describing where things are, who's affected, and the depth of coverage about the cities' past uses of TIFs is terrific. "

2nd Place: Rockford Register Star, Kevin Haas. Tax coverage by Kevin Haas. "Clear, informative coverage of important tax matters."

3rd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Drew Zimmerman. Daily Chronicle – Taxation. "The rezoning and TIF stories seemed to lead with the bureaucratic. The gas tax story was much better, bringing the reader in with a specific to which to relate. The 'Mapping TIF's future' story was excellent: clear, had command of the subject and depth."

Honorable Mention: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Debra Pressey. Debra Pressey. "The reporting is clear and impressive, particularly with that complicated Carle dispute. I wasn't crazy about the word 'indefinitely' in the story about the state Supreme Court's non-ruling."

Division F

1st Place: Belleville News-Democrat, Lexi Cortes, Joseph Bustos. Sales tax increase proposals coverage. "Great coverage all around!"

2nd Place: Chicago Sun-Times, Tim Novak. The breaks of the property-tax game.'

CLASS 36 - BEST INVESTIGATIVE/ENTERPRISE REPORTING

Division A

1st Place: Ford County Record, Paxton, Will Brumleve. \$1M in bills incurred challenging appeal. "A sharp example of reporting that shows how the public money goes to pay endless legal bills."

2nd Place: Mahomet Citizen, Fred Kroner. Disability services. "A valuable public service story that revealed the difficulties to find workers for a home for the disabled kept it from opening."

3rd Place: Ford County Record, Paxton, Will Brumleve. Memo details mayor's ultimatum to police chief. "A good use of the FOIA law to obtain a memo that shed detailed light on the firing of a police chief."

Honorable Mention: Ford County Record, Paxton, Will Brumleve. Letter sent from ex-owners influenced decision. "An enterprising piece of work on a land deal."

Division B

1st Place: Riverside-Brookfield Landmark, Brett McNeil and Bob Uphues. A street paved with gold/Easy money. "Terrific local reporting on red light camera citations with independent data work led the way on how municipalities and a corporation were profiting off of questionable traffic tickets."

2nd Place: The Galena Gazette, Hillary Dickerson, Carter Newton. Coming to Galena: Stories of Immigration. "A much needed deep look into the immigrant community and the threats to it."

Division C

1st Place: Illinois Times, Springfield, Bruce Rushton. A crazy system. "This expose took the case of one mentally ill woman to illustrate the failure of asking local jails to provide services for mentally ill inmates."

2nd Place: Kane County Chronicle, St. Charles, Brenda Schory. Documents tie Jenny McCarthy's charity to unfinished clinic. "The probe into a charity's fundraising for a health clinic and subsequent construction snafus provided a window into the complexities and problems of philanthropic activities."

3rd Place: Illinois Times, Springfield, Bruce Rushton. Illinois Press Association Contest Rigging. "A investigation into the actions of the head of the press association exposed mismanagement of its awards and led to the resignation of the head and the restoration of the integrity of the contest."

Division D

1st Place: Journal Gazette & Times-Courier, Mattoon, Staff. State of the University. "A strong series of stories showed how the lack of state budget damaged both a university and a community."

2nd Place: Breeze-Courier, Taylorville, Mike Frazier. An Examination of Christian County Township budgets. "A deep look into the townships of Christian county and their budgets was a strong example of how a newsroom can probe into the often invisible workings of government."

3rd Place: Daily Chronicle, DeKalb, Christopher. DeKalb Chronicle – Juarez Murder Investigation. "The DeKalb Chronicle showed dedication and vigilance in following up the murder of a mother of two and how the justice system failed to protect her despite her husband's record of domestic violence."

Honorable Mention: McDonough County Voice, Macomb, Michelle Langhout. Demand for pork leads to rural tax boon. "A good example of enterprising effort to localize and make more meaningful a state wide story on hog farms."

Division E

1st Place: The Southern Illinoisan, Carbondale, Molly Parker. Cairo public housing crisis. "The continued in-depth reporting of the mismanagement and terrible government oversight of Cairo public housing is exemplary and represents the finest in public service reporting."

2nd Place: Rockford Register Star, Corina Curry. Race in the Rock River Valley. "An excellent use of data and relentless reporting by the Rockford Register Star to expose continuing deep racial disparity in Rockford public schools, whether its in discipline, student achievement or the diversifying of the faculty."

3rd Place: The Times, Ottawa, David Giuliani. Ambulance Response. "Exposing the ridiculous and dangerous situation in which a local emergency room could not accept ambulances bringing patients, the Times coverage not only resulted in the end of bureaucratic bungling but also probably saved lives."

Honorable Mention: The News-Gazette, Champaign, Ben Zigterman. How pursuit played out. "A worthy detailed follow-up to a police shooting."

Division F

1st Place: Chicago Tribune Media Group, Jason Grotto, Sandhya Kambhampati, Ray Long. The Tax Divide. "A model of a public service investigation revealed scandalous inequities and errors in a seemingly rigged property assessment system that favored the wealthy and exploited the

poor. The thorough reporting though data analysis and extensive reporting has led to investigations and a key official being voted out of office."

2nd Place: Chicago Tribune Media Group, Patricia Callahan. "Doomed by Delay." "A heart-wrenching story of how an unfeeling and incompetent government and its health officials resulted in children unnecessarily dying from a horrific disease."

3rd Place: Daily Herald Group, Arlington Heights, Jake Griffin. On Your Dime. "Terrific and solid reporting on taxpayers being charged for the excessive travel, dining and drinking expenses by government officials. Especially notable was the \$8,680.55 spent on registration, food, transportation and hotel rooms for six elected officials to attend a three-day conference 22 miles from their town's village hall."

Honorable Mention: Journal Star, Peoria, Matt Buedel. Roots of Caterpillar Investigation. "A strong series of stories into the tax schemes of an international corporation and the investigations into that corporation."