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Three winners named for 2021 McCree Journalism Awards

LANSING __ Journalism projects that examined, explained and exposed problems and important issues in law enforcement and the legal system were today named winners of the 45th annual Wade H. McCree Advancement of Justice Awards, sponsored by the Michigan Press Association Foundation.

The awards were determined by a panel of four judges, representing law and media, who independently reviewed ten entries from across Michigan.

The winners:

- Reporter Sarah Cwiek of Michigan Radio for her investigation “Tax foreclosure lawsuit asks: How much can government take from property owners?” This article shows how citizens, especially those at risk of foreclosure, don’t even know how the process works. It’s a complicated issue before the Michigan Supreme Court, but many homeowners don’t realize how easy it can be to lose their home if they are unaware, they owe some back taxes. Michigan Radio’s Sarah Cwiek explains this to listeners in her in-depth report on the case and provides helpful additional information in our web post. Hopefully, this public service reporting will help others keep their homes by understanding how the system currently operates. It is a law that merits reforming.
- Reporter Chandra Bozelko of Holland Sentinel for her columns “Insider takes on Prisons and Courts.” She uses real life experiences to show case how the prisons and the judicial system works. These are the stories and explanations of what's really happening in these places. And readers don't find them anywhere other than my column. I would be honored to bring you "inside" by reading them as part of this submission.
- Reporter Nancy Kaffer of Detroit Free Press for an in-depth investigation “She’s tormented by final days’ unexplained death of little sisters in Harper Woods Jail.” Kaffer delved into the circumstances of Slater’s death. Caught on video having a seizure around 5 a.m., Slater wasn’t found dead by jail staff for seven hours. Little attempt has been made to explain the long lapse, and two Harper Woods cops were fired after the report of her death was altered. The Wayne County Prosecutor’s Office is investigating and will ultimately decide whether any Harper Woods employees should be charged in Slater’s death. Kaffer’s work changed the narrative of Slater’s death, raising questions about whether she could have been saved. And it showed the world a real person, someone whose life mattered.
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The McCree awards are named for Judge Wade H. McCree (1920-87) one of the most distinguished lawyers and jurists in Michigan history and a staunch advocate for equal rights and

open, accountable government. McCree served as a circuit, federal and U.S. Appeals court judge and, from 1977-81, as solicitor general of the United States.

The coveted McCree awards are based on the significance and informative level of the journalism, plus its impact on changing and improving the legal and law enforcement systems.

The awards will be presented to the winners at a later date due to the Coronavirus the Hall of Fame banquet was postponed.

The Michigan Press Association Foundation was created in 1980 to further the interests of journalism in Michigan. The Foundation's mission includes serving the public interest by encouraging, fostering and aiding improvements in the quality, vigor and fairness of Michigan journalism and a free press in the State of Michigan. The Foundation, which also sponsors the Michigan Journalist of the Year competition, has invested more than \$330,000 in Michigan journalism since 1990, including the award of nearly 300 scholarships to college-level journalism students.

Learn more about the MPA Foundation at michiganpress.org/mpafoundation.

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