

2021 Better Newspaper Contest

General Information

Entry Deadline:

11:59 p.m., October 1, 2021

Entries must be uploaded by 11:59 p.m.

2021 dues must be paid in full to enter the contest.



Contest Period:

August 1, 2020, through July 31, 2021

Contest Site:

Digital files must be uploaded through the contest site,
www.betternewspapercontest.com

Your Password: Contestant managers – If you entered the contest last year you must use the same password. If this is your first time entering the contest your initial password is **bnc**. If **bnc** does not work, it means someone in your organization has already accessed the site and changed your password. ***More information about how to use the website is available at betternewspapercontest.com under Help at the top right corner of the home page.***

Help: If you're having trouble with the website click on "Contact BetterBNC" in the top right corner of the page for tutorials or to open a trouble ticket. Call MPA World Headquarters at 517.372.2424 or call Diana's cell at 517-610-4813 or email bnc@michiganpress.org for questions about the contest or rules.

Presentation of Awards:

Judges shall award first, second and third place in all contest categories—editorial and advertising—with the option of awarding honorable mention if they deem necessary. Judges reserve the right to award fewer or no awards if a category does not have adequate entries with sufficient merit.

An out-of-state press association will judge both contests. Contest results will be announced in 2022 at a time to be determined. Special awards will be presented

to News–Media of the Year, Newspaper of the Year, Rookie Writer, Public Notice Journalism, Excellence in Policing and Social Justice Reporting and Advertising Excellence Award winners in 2022. Certificates will be mailed to the winning newspapers shortly after.

[An Overview of the Editorial Contest](#)

*Any newspaper that is an active member in good standing of the Michigan Press Association is eligible to participate in the MPA Better Newspaper Contest. **2021 dues must be paid in full to enter the contest.***

Entry Fee:

Base fee to enter the contest is \$30 with an addition \$10 fee for each entry. These fees are non–refundable. Full payment must accompany your entries or be received at MPA by the contest deadline, or your entries will be disqualified. MPA will not invoice newspapers for their contest fees.

PAYMENT OPTION: When all your entries are complete with all files uploaded, click on the calculate entry fee button under manage entries where you'll see a total at the bottom and an option to pay by credit card/PayPal or by check. Payments by credit card show confirmed after the transaction. Checks will be marked paid after receipt. Login to check your account before the deadline.

MAILED PAYMENTS SHOULD BE POSTMARKED ON OR BEFORE October 1, 2021, and sent to:

Michigan Press Association
Better Newspaper Contest
827 N. Washington Ave.
Lansing, MI 48906

Deadlines:

*Work must have been published between August 1, 2020.and July 31, 2021
Entries must be uploaded no later than 11:59 p.m., October 1, 2021. **Deadline will not be extended.***

Contest Circulation Classes (for editorial entries only):

Circulation figures that were given on the 2021 Information Update forms.
Weekday circulation of daily and multi–day newspapers will apply.

Daily A: Over 20,000

Daily B: 11,001 – 20,000

Daily C: 5,001 – 11,000

Daily D: 5,000 and under.

Weekly A: Over 15,000

Weekly B: 7,001 – 15,000

Weekly C: 3,001 – 7,000

Weekly D: 3,000 and under.

NEW 2021 News Media classes

News Media Statewide

See News Media Rules for categories

News Media Local

See News Media Rules for categories

Individual: Individual Members

Group Newspapers

A writer, copy editor, page designer or photographer cannot compete in more than one class and therefore should submit entries from the largest circulation newspaper in which they are published.

Individual Members:

If an individual member is also freelancing or works for a newspaper/news media member paper all work done for that member should be entered under the newspaper/news media member.

How to Enter:

1. Select best issues, story, or photo for each competition. Keep in mind criteria for judging and any special rules for the contest category of competition being entered.
2. No entry may be submitted in more than one similar category. Example: you cannot submit the same story in Sports Writing and Sports Feature. Acceptable Exception: If a Local News entry happens to appear in a special section or special contest such as Public Service Award.
3. Entrants may include brief background information on the community or communities they serve, publishing conditions of the newspaper or about the entry itself. Please use the “comments” area when submitting your entry to convey this to the judges. Communication to the judge must be included with each entry, rather than one letter covering all entries.
4. Any entries in Categories 1–20 can be entered in the Open Categories.

How to submit entries online:

- A. Begin by going to www.betterbnc.com to upload your entries. A “Contestant Manager” widget will guide you through the entry process. If you were the contestant manager last year your login & password has not changed.
- B. If the category you are entering has a limit on the number of entries allowed (categories #8, 10, Public Service Award, and MPA Rookie Writer), that category will no longer display in the dropdown menu on the “Submit Entry” page once you’ve reached the limit.
- C. A single uploaded file can be up to 10 megabytes in size. However, it is strongly recommended you compress files to under 5 MB in size, so that judges can quickly view your entries.
- D. Please note that you may change your selection of entries as often as you would like by going back to the “Managing Entries” page before the October 1 deadline.
- E. If submitting full-page pdf files clearly indicate photos and stories being judged in the comments area.
- F. If you are submitting a URL that is behind a paywall, please make sure to include the username and password, so the judges can judge the category.

2021 BNC Editorial Categories**1. Spot News Story**

To a writer or team for entries that consist of coverage of one spot or breaking news event, which could include sports coverage. Judging will be based on news or sports value, writing clarity and style, depth of reporting and immediacy. A letter may be included explaining factors like access to the site, enterprise of the reporter, when the event happened vs. the next publishing deadline and conveyance of the info from the scene to the newsroom.

2. News Enterprise Reporting

To a writer for a single story or series (No more than eight articles in a series) that demonstrates in-depth exploration of an issue with strong news value that helps the reader better understand a facet of life, the community or issues surrounding news events. Strong writing, thorough research and good presentation are critical. A letter explaining story background to justify its entry in this category may be included.

3. Government/Education News

To a writer or team for entries covering a government or education issue. Judging will be based on news value, writing clarity and style, and depth of reporting.

4. Business/Agriculture News

To a writer or team for entries covering a business or agriculture issue. Judging will be based on news value, writing clarity and style, and depth of reporting.

5. Feature Story

To a writer for a story that demonstrates unusual literary excellence, originality, and insight (either serious or lighthearted).

6. Best Editorial

To a writer for an editorial that demonstrates a high regard for reader concerns, editorial initiative, enterprise, and courage.

7. Best Columnist

To a local writer whose column is published on an ongoing basis. Editorials do not qualify, nor do syndicated columns originating from another source. One entry per Columnist (you can have more than one attachment of their work)

8. Best Newspaper Design

To a newspaper for excellence in typography and graphics. Overall graphic design, typography and use of photographs will be considered, as well as special applications in news columns. Submit your best issue from the contest period.

9. Best Page or Pages Design

To a newspaper for best use of excellence in typography and graphics in a news story or spread. Overall graphic design, typography, and use of photographs will be considered, as well as special applications in news columns. Submit your best page or pages related to a specific editorial topic.

10. Special Section

To a newspaper for initiative, enterprise, and creativity for a special news section. All entries will be judged on news content, originality, customer appeal, creativity in conception and layout. Emphasis is on locally produced art and copy. An entry consists of one section. A newspaper may submit up to three entries in the contest.

11. News Photo

To a photographer for a published news photograph. Entries will be judged for their storytelling quality, impact, reader interest, technical quality, and evidence of special initiative. A statement explaining factors that might not be apparent from the picture itself, for example, circumstances under which the picture was taken or reader reaction to the picture may be included.

12. Feature Photo

To a photographer for a published feature photograph of exceptional quality.

13. Photo Story

To a photographer for a published photo story or series on one subject. Entries will be judged for their story-telling quality, impact, reader interest and composition.

14. Sports Photograph

To a photographer for a published sports photo of exceptional quality.

15. Sports Writing

To a writer for a story that covers a specific sporting event and shows originality, news value and reader interest considering deadline pressure.

16. Best Sports Column

To a writer for a column that covers a sports-related issue.

17. Sports Feature

To a writer for sports feature not covering a specific sporting event that displays exceptional development, creativity, and enterprise.

18. Best Video Presentation

Submit your videos and let the judge select first, second and third place from ANY MPA member. This is limited to “video and picture story reporting.” Other than that, there are no limits.

19. Best Digital Presentation

MPA member newspapers entering this contest will have their websites/social media randomly visited between November 1, 2020 – January 13, 2021. Please provide a username and password for your website, if necessary, so that judges may visit all areas of your site. Judges can also evaluate the newspapers social media along with the websites. Please make sure to include a link to any social media you would like judged (ie. Facebook, twitter, linkedin, Instagram or tiktok).

Websites and social media will be judged on the following:

- **Content:** Quality of the news & editorial matter, timeliness, selection, and organization of the items.
- **Visual/Design:** Layout, use of graphics, photographs, animation, color and
- **Advertising:** Innovative strategies and/or evidence of revenue generation.
- **Community:** Demonstration that the website fulfills a “gatekeeper to the community” role.
- **Interactivity:** Incorporation of elements that take advantage of the medium.

20. Public Service Award

MPA members are encouraged to submit entries in this annual contest that recognize excellence in public service. Community service groups are also encouraged to nominate newspapers or newspaper people. Newspapers may nominate themselves or their employees.

Work completed between August 1, 2020, and July 31, 2021, is eligible. Work may have started before August 1 or continued past July 31, but majority of the project must have occurred during the time frame given. Ongoing projects are acceptable.

- **An entry consists of a compilation of no more than 15 news stories, features, editorials, or photographs on a related subject AND/OR a letter outlining the contribution in detail. These should be uploaded online at www.betterbnc.com as an entry in the Public Service Award Category.**

Open Class Contests

*All Michigan Press Association members can enter these open class contests. Entries will be judged against each other regardless of circulation or platform. Open class contests do **NOT** count toward the “Newspaper of the Year.”*

All submissions should be in PDF or URL format and under 3 MB.

1. Best Headline

An entry consists of one headline (and, if you want, subhead). Submit your best one and let the judge select first, second and third place from ANY MPA member publication or website.

2. Best Photo

Submit your best photo and let the judge select first, second and third place from ANY MPA member publication or website. Work must be done by the entrant. Wondering what will determine the winner? Is it storytelling quality, impact, reader interest, relevance? Simple: all those elements. Or none of them. The best photo will... speak for itself. It's OK if you enter the photo in another MPA contest category.

3. Best Writing

The judge will select a first, second and third place winner from ANY MPA member publication or website based on writing clarity and style. Anything is eligible. It's OK if you enter the work in another MPA contest category.

4. Best Podcast

Submit your best one and let the judge select first, second and third place from ANY MPA member. This is limited to “Podcast reporting.” Other than that, there are no limits.

5. Most Innovative Story Telling

To a newspaper or website that uses any combination of methods to tell a story for maximum impact using multiple forms of media, including the main print product. Project may include stories, photographs presented in various forms, video, blogs,

audio files, etc. Judging will be based on how the individual elements add to a total package without being merely duplicative. Please provide specific URLs for all postings and include a username and password in the comment box for the entry if your site is subscription only. Entrants are responsible for Web availability of entries between the deadline date and the following three months. Incorrect URLs will NOT be judged. Please verify that the URL you enter works, and that it will be “live” for at least three months.

Special Awards, Contests & Instructions

Newspaper of the Year Award

The Newspaper of the Year Award honors the newspaper winning the most points awarded for placing in each editorial contest. There will be one award in each of the eight editorial circulation classes. Contest categories 1–20 count toward the award. Points are awarded as follows:

First Place..... 100 points

Second Place.... 70 points

Third Place 40 points

NEW: News Media Publication of the year.

The News Media publication of the Year Award honors the newspaper winning the most points awarded for placing in each editorial contest. There will be one award in each of the eight editorial circulation classes. Contest categories 1–15 count toward the award (see the News Media rules for the list of those categories). Points are awarded as follows:

First Place..... 100 points

Second Place.... 70 points

Third Place 40 points

MPA Rookie Writer Award

Good writing and reporting are critical to the success of newspapers. That requires good writers and reporters. In order to recognize exemplary efforts of new writers just breaking into the field of journalism, MPA has established a Rookie Writer Award. Reporters who have fewer than three years’ experience in the newspaper industry are eligible for consideration. Winning writers will not be eligible in future years. Only one entrant per newspaper.

An entry consists of the following:

- At least three, but no more than five stories. Stories should be solely written by the entrant and can be hard news, features or published commentary.
- A letter of nomination from the editor is required explaining what sets the writer apart.

These should be uploaded online at www.betterbnc.com as an entry in the Rookie Writer Award Category.

Public Notice Journalism Award–This will be judged by Michigan newspaper professionals.

The purpose of this competition is to recognize excellence in journalism that draws reader attention to public notices, and to encourage reporters and editors to incorporate public notice and public notice issues into their reporting and writing.

For purposes of this award, public notice is defined as announcements or disclosures the law requires a governmental unit or private party to publish in a statutorily qualified newspaper.

Entries must consist of a news story or series (not an editorial or opinion piece) initially prompted by a public notice that drew attention to the subject, or in which a public notice or the omission of a public notice figured heavily in the reporting. Stories should reference and/or provide a link to the notice; or if the story is based on a public notice requirement that was not met or was deficient, it must describe the deficiency.

Editorials or opinion pieces about public notice DO NOT qualify.

In addition to the story, entries that aren't about the omission or deficiency of a public notice must include a copy of the original notice that was the source or subject of the reporting.

Entries may be accompanied by a brief explanation (one single-spaced page or less) that provides context about the story and/or a description of its impact. This award comes with a \$200 prize to the winner, sponsored by Detroit Legal News Publishing.

Best FOIA Story

An award for the best story using FOIA as the main tool to gain information. This award will shine a spotlight on the importance of FOIA in getting information about what is going on in government.

NEW – Excellence in Policing and Social Justice Reporting

The last year and a half have been an extremely challenging time for communities and law enforcement agencies throughout the United States. High-profile use-of-force incidents led to days of protests; civil unrest; and, tragically, further violence, destruction, and death. Unfortunately, these protests have, in far too many communities, further widened the gap between police agencies and their communities.

Local journalism reporting on this topic is crucial to communities in Michigan. Entries in this category will be judged on not only real time reporting on community events, but also the underlying causes and what solutions are being proposed throughout the state.

It was brought to our attention that for this category we should include the time period around the George Floyd incident in Minneapolis as well as protests that followed earlier in the summer last year.

Therefore, anything published on this topic from May 1 2020– July 31, 202 (THAT WASN'T SUBMITTED IN LAST YEAR'S CONTEST) is eligible for this category only.

Special Contest Details

There is no fee for special contests other than the initial \$30 entry fee. Entries should be submitted ONLINE. Finalists will be notified in January. The winners will be announced 2022.

[An Overview of the Advertising Rules](#)

Any newspaper that is an active member in good standing of the Michigan Press Association is eligible to participate in the MPA Advertising Contest.

Advertising Contest Entries are broken up into Daily and Non-Daily (Weekly/News Media) circulation classes

How to Enter:

- Submit full–page PDFs or URL.
- All ads must have been produced by MPA member newspaper ad staff or art department.
- No outside agency or account–produced material will be accepted.
- All entries will be judged on design, layout, illustrations, creativity, and adaptability.

2021 Excellence in Advertising Award

The Excellence in Advertising Award honors the Daily and non–daily (weekly/news media) newspaper winning the most points awarded for placing in each advertising contest. Contest categories 1–17 count toward the award.

Points are awarded as follows:

First Place..... 100 points
Second Place.... 70 points
Third Place	40 points

1. Community Business Promotions

Any ad featuring multiple advertisers from one location, a mall, Shopping Center, Shopping District, Downtown or Community.

2. Home Services Ad

Any ad involving professional sales and services relating to the mechanical or physical structure of a home or business. Roofing, Siding, Heating and Cooling, Electrical, Plumbing, Remodeling or New Construction, Interior Design (not furnishing), or Architectural.

3. Home Furnishings Ad

Any ad dealing with Furniture, Appliances, Kitchen and Bath Design or Equipment, Carpeting, Flooring, Painting, Television Services or Home Theater, Cleaning of Homes or Offices and Disaster Restoration Services.

4. New and Used Autos. Recreational Vehicles and Boats

Any ad dealing with the sales of New and/ or used cars, trucks, recreational vehicles, boats, or cycles.

5. Real Estate

Any ad relating to the sale of new or previously owned Homes, Businesses or Land.

6. Entertaining Services

Any ad relating to programs of Dance, Theater, Music or Movies, whether live or recorded, for personal enjoyment. This would include TV (satellite or cable), Cinema and Live Concerts, Dinner Theater, or in conjunction with drinking and/ or eating, performed by professionals or amateurs.

7. Restaurants

Any ad pertaining to dining out. Upscale to Fast Food.

8. General Retail

Any ad dealing with the direct sale of food (wine, candy, fudge), hard goods, or any consumer item, clothes to computers.

9. Small Ads Work

This category will take only ads 6 column inches or smaller. The ad may also be submitted in one of the aforementioned categories as well, but all ads in this category will be judged on the use of space and overall impact.

10. Best Digital ad

Ad can be static or animated, paid or house ad. Creativity and effectiveness of design and message will be criteria for judging. Upload file OR enter URL. The URL must remain active and accessible URL until January 1, 2022. *Ad may be .jpg, .gif or Flash. Must have an animated or dynamic element.

11. Best Health/Fitness

Any ad pertaining to mind, body, and health.

12. Best use of Color

Based on the visual appearance of ad layout.

13. Best Special Section

Minimum 4–page section or feature that has header or cover page and must have unique content specific to feature topic

14. Best Ad Grouping

Any sig ads, or group ads, no content needed

15. Best in House Circulation Ad

Any promotion to add to circulation whether it is print or digital ads

16. Best in House Content Promotion

Any digital or in print promotion to promote your content, including editorial, advertising or events

17. Best Community Cause Marketing

To include a group of ads or sigs, that include content for local unique cause or awareness, such as cancer, literacy, autism, etc.

Frequently Asked Questions

What file formats may be used to enter the contest?

If you are not using a URL to link to your entry, the best file format to use is a low-resolution PDF. Please combine multiple PDFs and compress to the recommended size of 5mb or lower. Acceptable file types are PDF, JPG, GIF, and PNG — NO Word files!

What if my information is wrong or my paper is not listed?

Contact bnc@michiganpress.org and your information will be reviewed.

What combination of online and print publications can I use?

With this year's contest, website work can be included with writing entries.

Online-only news sources would provide URLs to their entries, but any print newspaper may submit online-only work as well as supplemental digital work that support a printed story. Submit the URL along with the PDF of a story.

Unsure what you can submit from your newspaper's website? For example, if you published a feature story that had one large photograph in the print edition, but an entire gallery of photographs online, can you submit a URL to the story online along with a PDF of what was printed? The answer is YES.... within reason. If the gallery was a large component of your story and readers were directed there (because staff spent significant time editing said gallery), then it is relevant to your story. If it is just a little "something extra," then do not submit the URL to the online gallery. Judges have a LOT to judge, and their focus should be on material relevant to the story.

Do I need to send anything to Michigan Press Association World Headquarters?

The entire contest is online only this year. You can even pay online with credit card or PayPal. Please follow payment instructions at BetterNewspaperContest.com.

How can I make my PDF files smaller?

Most newspaper PDFs include high-resolution grayscale or CMYK images for printing. However, PDF contest entries will be viewed and judged on a computer monitor, which displays at low resolution (72-96dpi) in RGB color. Changes in the resolution and color mode of images are the most effective ways to reduce file size without sacrificing quality.

1. Resolution. In PDFs, text is always clear regardless of resolution: resolution relates only to photos and rasterized graphics. Reducing resolution by half reduces image file size by 75%. The recommended maximum resolution of 96dpi can be enforced by Distiller settings.

2. Color mode. Converting from CMYK to RGB color will reduce image file size by another 25%. This color conversion can again be enforced by Distiller settings.

If you reduce image resolution and/or convert color mode in your entry PDFs with a PDF editor (e.g., Enfocus Pitstop or Quite a Box of Tricks) or use the native profiling/editing tools in Acrobat 6 or later, YOU WILL NOT GAIN THE EXPECTED REDUCTION IN FILE SIZE unless you redistill the PDF afterward.

When will we see the results of the contest?

Contest results will be announced at the Annual Convention. Certificates will be mailed shortly after. If your newspaper is part of a group, your certificates will be mailed with other certificates awarded for that group to the publisher.

Who can enter the Open Class Contests?

*If you are a member newspaper, college member, individual member or News Media Member and **your dues are paid in full you can enter.***

How do I know what to write in my entry descriptions?

First, know that whatever you write in your entry fields is what the judges will see. We WILL NOT edit what you put there, so if you credit "PeeWee Herman" with writing a story that is who the judges will see. Also, PeeWee will be awarded a certificate, because we will use entry titles and credits to print on awards. Being simple and direct with your descriptions is best. If an entire staff is responsible for an entry, simply write "staff" in the credits.

What if there are several run dates for my one entry?

You must enter a run date. Please enter the earliest date of the entry and the remaining dates in the comment section.

Other Information:

Contest is open to Staff Members of the member only.

For freelancers to be able to enter they need to have their own membership.

Where can I get more help for anything I can't find here?

Call: 517-372-2424 or Diana's cell at 517-610-4813

Email: bnc@michiganpress.org

FYI: You now have access to save your work throughout the year. By creating your own Open Call account, you can utilize the site's new "Contestant Scrapbook" feature and be more prepared when contest time rolls around. Contestants can upload content from their Scrapbooks directly into an entry. Setting up and using Scrapbooks is easy and intuitive, but if you should have any questions on the uses and features of Scrapbooks, contact the website for more information. Just follow on-screen instructions to set it up.