Statewide Contest Spotlights Quality Journalism

Members of Arkansas Press Association reviewed 186 entries submitted by 9 Michigan News Media members this year. The competition inspires all journalists to produce their best work, which in turn, nurtures stronger communities.

“It’s clear the huge amount of work our collective newsrooms are doing all over the state to serve their communities. Covering our beats is crucial work that supports the democratic process in each community in Michigan; it’s work that supports the spirit of each community we serve. We have wonderful examples here of the tremendous talent we have in our state. These recent years have been difficult, but we will look back on these times with pride for all the positive impact we’re having on our readers”. Paul J. Heidbreder, Michigan Press Association President and Publisher of the Traverse City Record-Eagle.

The 2021 “News Media Publication of the Year” award is presented to the top News Media publication in the Local and Statewide circulation classes based on points accumulated (100 for first, 70 for second and 40 for third) in all Editorial contest categories. Winners of those awards are listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Circulation Class</th>
<th>Total Points</th>
<th>News Media Publication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>Flint Beat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statewide</td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td>Bridge Michigan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The MPA Rookie Writer Award recognizes exemplary efforts of new writers just breaking into journalism. The three finalists are: Sam Dodge of The Ann Arbor News, Amy Diaz of the Flint Beat and Sierra Clark of the Traverse City Record-Eagle, with the award going to Amy Diaz.

Excellence in Policing and Social Justice Reporting recognizes 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. The three finalists are Bridge Michigan for “Struggles with Racism in Northern Michigan”, BridgeDetroit & NBC News for “Built to keep Black from White” and Michigan Advance for “The history and politics of police reform efforts in Michigan” with the award going to BridgeDetroit & NBC News.

The Best FOIA Story Award recognizes 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. The best story using FOIA as the main tool to gain information. The three finalists are: Grand Rapids Press for “Whitmer said Separation agreements like Robert Gordon’s are used often in State Government”, Bridge Michigan for “Emails: Michigan sheriff sought to seize voting machines amid Trump claims”, and Kalamazoo Gazette for “Kalamazoo closed-door meetings exposed”, with the award going to Bridge Michigan.

The MPA Public Service Award recognizes a distinguished example of meritorious public service by a newspaper or newspaper individual that has made a significant contribution to the betterment of their community. Winners of this award is listed below based on their circulation Class:

Statewide: Michigan Advance for “How Michiganders are coping with the COVID crisis”

The 2022 MPA Better Newspaper Contest opens August 1, 2022.
2021 Better Newspaper Contest Editorial Results

**Best Digital Award**

News Media-Statewide - Best Digital Award
3 Entries
First Place **Bridge Michigan**
Bridge Michigan
Bridge Staff
Second Place **GreatLakesNow.org**
Great Lakes Now
Natasha Blakely
Third Place **Michigan Advance**
Nelle Dunlap, Joe Wright, Susan J. Demas

**Best Opinion**

News Media-Local - Best Opinion
6 Entries
First Place **Glen Arbor Sun Newspaper**
From Republican to hippie: my evolution, a party’s evolution
Norm Wheeler
Second Place **Glen Arbor Sun Newspaper**
Protect American democracy. Restore our values. Fire Trump
Jacob Wheeler
Third Place **Glen Arbor Sun Newspaper**
Reconciling with racism: a baseball story, a Henry Aaron memory
Norm Wheeler

News Media-Statewide - Best Opinion
3 Entries
First Place **Michigan Advance**
Susan J. Demas
Second Place **Michigan Advance**
Rick Haglund
Third Place **Michigan Information and Research Services, Inc.**
Redistricting panel a train wreck waiting to happen
Kyle Melinn

**Best Page or Pages Design**

News Media-Statewide - Best Page or Pages Design
5 Entries
First Place **Michigan Advance**
What four new wilderness areas would mean for the U.P.
Laina G. Stebbins, Susan J. Demas
Second Place **Up Magazine**
Afraid to Travel
Michael Van Den Branden
Third Place **Up Magazine**
Birthday Interrupted
Michael Van Den Branden

**Best Publication Design**

News Media-Statewide - Best Publication Design
2 Entries
First Place **Michigan Advance**
Michigan Advance
Nelle Dunlap, Joe Wright, Susan J. Demas
Second Place **Up Magazine**
Total Drop Box Issue
Michael Van Den Branden

**Best Video Presentation**

News Media-Local - Best Video Presentation
1 Entries
First Place **BridgeDetroit/NBC News**
Built to Keep Black from White
Staff & Erin Einhorn with NBC News

News Media-Statewide - Best Video Presentation
18 Entries
First Place **GreatLakesNow.org**
Mystery Freighter
Rob Green, Ward Detwiler, Jordan Wingrove, Sarah Pagura
Second Place **Michigan Advance**
Women leaders speak up about harassment, misogyny in Michigan politics
Laina G. Stebbins
Third Place **GreatLakesNow.org**
Best Supporting Fish
Staff

**Business/Agriculture News**

News Media-Local - Business/Agriculture News
3 Entries
First Place **Flint Beat**
Black owned: How one Flint family is fighting barriers in the health care industry
Carmen Nesbitt
Second Place **Glen Arbor Sun Newspaper**
Cherry farmers find creative solutions during challenging season
Madeleine Vedel
Third Place **Glen Arbor Sun Newspaper**
Immigrant farmworkers meet the nation's Commander in Chief
Jacob Wheeler

News Media-Statewide - Business/Agriculture News
14 Entries
First Place **Bridge Michigan**
'These people want to work.' When GM and Flint post jobs, people line up
Ron French
Honorable Mention **Bridge Michigan**
In 'dire need,' 1 in 5 Michigan restaurants may not survive winter
Paula Gardner
Second Place **Bridge Michigan**
Michigan caregivers got a $2 raise during COVID. Should it be permanent?
Robin Erb
Third Place **Bridge Michigan**
Wolf wars: As Michigan packs grow, a battle brews over killing the predators
Sophia Kalakailo, Kelly House

**Feature Photo**

News Media-Statewide - Feature Photo
6 Entries
First Place **Bridge Michigan**
Virtual school blues
Daytona Niles
Second Place **Bridge Michigan**
Woman and her dying husband
Daytona Niles
Third Place Michigan Advance
Detroit Will Breathe co-founder Nakia Wallace continues her fight against police brutality
Ken Coleman

Honorables Mention Michigan Advance
Highland Park Senior Coordinator Sharmaine Robinson working at a COVID vaccine clinic
Ken Coleman

Feature Story

News Media-Local - Feature Story
11 Entries
First Place Flint Beat
For 48 years, he’s been a grandfather, father, uncle, and mentor-all from prison
Santiago Ochoa

Honorables Mention Glen Arbor Sun Newspaper
Meet the public health workers protecting us from COVID-19
Jacob Wheeler

Second Place Glen Arbor Sun Newspaper
Glen Arbor daughter strives to bring home airmen MIA from World War II
Linda Dewey

Third Place Flint Beat
Rest in paint: Flint muralist remembered for generosity, kindness
Amy Diaz

News Media-Statewide - Feature Story
20 Entries
First Place Michigan Information and Research Services, Inc.
Snowman Cam Guy Drifts From Life In Solitude To Likely State House Seat
Kyle Melinn

Second Place Bridge Michigan
He had dementia and COVID. She wanted to hold him when he died.
Robin Erb

Third Place GreatLakesNow.org
Public Resource
Noah Bock

Honorables Mention Chalkbeat
‘I don’t want to forget him’: How a close-knit Detroit school coped with the death of a mentor and role model
Lori Higgins

Government/Education News

News Media-Local - Government/Education News
3 Entries
First Place Flint Beat
Flint water crisis settlement
Amy Diaz

Second Place Glen Arbor Sun Newspaper
County’s digital divide hurts students’ ability to learn online during Coronavirus pandemic
Jacob Wheeler

Third Place Flint Beat
Flint’s Special Education Funding
Carmen Nesbitt

News Media-Statewide - Government/Education News
22 Entries
First Place Bridge Michigan
The push for government transparency in school covid reporting
Ron French, Robin Erb, Mike Wilkinson

Second Place Chalkbeat
Unpacking the pandemic school year
Koby Levin, Eleanore Catolico

Third Place Chalkbeat
Inside a challenging, transformative year for Michigan’s early childhood education system
Koby Levin

Honorables Mention Michigan Advance
Here’s what could happen in Michigan if Roe v. Wade is overturned
Allison R. Donahue

News Enterprise Reporting

News Media-Local - News Enterprise Reporting
8 Entries
First Place Flint Beat
Dissecting Flint’s Plan to Combat Gun Violence
Amy Diaz

Second Place Glen Arbor Sun Newspaper
Grist mill zoning spat confounds Glen Arbor Township
Josephine Arrowood

Third Place Glen Arbor Sun Newspaper
Private beach wall could dramatically change Empire shoreline
Jacob Wheeler

Honorables Mention Glen Arbor Sun Newspaper
If she hadn’t been in the car, she would be alive today - COVID-19 claims 30-year-old Native American
Jacob Wheeler

News Media-Statewide - News Enterprise Reporting
16 Entries
First Place Bridge Michigan
Mental health among children during COVID
Robin Erb, Carter Barrett

Second Place Chalkbeat
High teacher turnover is hurting Michigan’s most vulnerable students
Koby Levin, Gabrielle LaMarr LeMee

Third Place Bridge Michigan
Loved to death: iconic Michigan lakeshores battered by crowds, waste
Kelly House 

Honorables Mention Michigan Advance
Black lawmakers warned of extremism and white supremacism for months. Leaders didn’t take action.
Allison R. Donahue, Susan J. Demas

News Photo

News Media-Statewide - News Photo
7 Entries
First Place Bridge Michigan
Militia girl
Dale Young

Second Place Michigan Advance
A group of Trump supporters pray over a Black Lives Matter protester at a Trump Rally after the race was officially called for Joe Biden
Anna Liz Nichols

Third Place Michigan Advance

Former President Obama rallies Democrats in Flint days before the close 2020 presidential election
Andrew Roth

Honorable Mention  Michigan Advance
Biden makes Michigan stop mask up after Trump tests positive for COVID
Andrew Roth

Public Service Award
News Media-Statewide - Public Service Award
3 Entries
First Place  Michigan Advance
How Michiganders are coping with the COVID crisis
Allison R. Donahue, Ken Coleman, Anna Gustafson, Susan J. Demas
Second Place  Bridge Michigan
Truth-telling in post-election Michigan
Jonathan Oosting, Mike Wilkinson, Madeline Halpert
Third Place  Up Magazine
Fund Raising for VA Homes, Hospitals and Memorials
Michael Van Den Branden, Robin Lindenberg - VDB

Sports Writing
News Media-Statewide - Sports Writing
6 Entries
First Place  Bridge Michigan
Long odds, short season: Michigan sturgeon a zany conservation success
Kelly House
Second Place  Bridge Michigan
Schools outraged that bars can open in Michigan, but not winter sports
Ron French
Third Place  Up Magazine
Look at me I can catch fish better than you
Ricki McCallum

Spot News Story
News Media-Local - Spot News Story
3 Entries
First Place  Flint Beat
Unmasked: Flint businesses return to normal as Covid restrictions are lifted
Kate Stockrahm
Second Place  Flint Beat
Gas station employee charged with shooting man outside locked door
Santiago Ochoa
Third Place  Glen Arbor Sun Newspaper
A stargazing good samaritan sounds the alarm on Le Bear fire - Jacob, June 3, 2021
Jacob Wheeler

News Media-Statewide - Spot News Story
10 Entries
First Place  Bridge Michigan
Militias, far-right groups recast selves as mainstream at Lansing gun rally
Jonathan Oosting
Second Place  Bridge Michigan

Bars, high schools closed as COVID spikes
Jonathan Oosting, Paula Gardner, Robin Erb, Ron French
Third Place  Michigan Advance
In wild meeting, Wayne Co. board certifies Biden as winner after GOP members initially blocked it
Ken Coleman, Susan J. Demas
Honorable Mention  Michigan Advance
At Michigan-Wisconsin border, enviros and tribes fight to keep new mine at bay
Laina G. Stebbins

Best FOIA Story
Open Class - Best FOIA Story
20 Entries
First Place  Bridge Michigan
Emails: Michigan sheriff sought to seize voting machines amid Trump claims
Jonathan Oosting
Second Place  Kalamazoo Gazette
Kalamazoo closed-door meetings exposed
Brad Devereaux
Third Place  Grand Rapids Press
Whitmer said separation agreements like Robert Gordon’s are used often in state government.
Emily Lawler
Honorable Mention  Kalamazoo Gazette
Reporter’s investigation reveals 'retired' police chief was actually fired
Brad Devereaux

Best Podcast
Open Class - Best Podcast
8 Entries
First Place  Detroit Free Press
On the Line
Cary Junior II, Darcie Moran, Tad Davis, Anjanette Delgado, Maryann Struman
Second Place  Grand Rapids Press
The Grand Rapids Press for best podcast category
Emily Lawler, Jessica Shepherd
Third Place  Michigan Information and Research Services, Inc.
MIRS Monday
Kyle Melinn
Honorable Mention  Traverse City Record-Eagle
The Get Around
Record-Eagle sports staff

Best Writing
Open Class - Best Writing
40 Entries
First Place  Bridge Michigan
He had dementia and COVID. She wanted to hold him when he died.
Robin Erb
Second Place  Traverse City Record-Eagle
Seawind Saga: Pilot who crashed in Lake Michigan had 7 crashes in 7 days
Mardi Link
Third Place  Kalamazoo Gazette
Unlikely relationships forge in battle to end gun violence in Kalamazoo
Ryan Boldrey
Honorable Mention  Grand Rapids Press
Michigan's most famous weed strain, Pinconning Paralyzer, eyes comeback after two-decade hibernation
Gus Burns

**Excellence in Policing and Social Justice Reporting**

Open Class - Excellence in Policing and Social Justice Reporting
18 Entries
First Place  BridgeDetroit/NBC News
*Built to Keep Black from White*
Staff & Erin Einhorn with NBC News
Second Place  Bridge Michigan
*Struggles with racism in northern Michigan*
Kelly House, Jonathan Oosting
Third Place  Michigan Advance
*The history and politics of police reform efforts in Michigan*
Staff
Honorable Mention  Grand Rapids Press
*Reporting on police and social justice in Michigan*
STAFF

**Rookie Writer**

Open Class - Rookie Writer
11 Entries
First Place  Flint Beat
Amy Diaz
Honorable Mention  Holland Sentinel
Arpan Lobo
Second Place  Traverse City Record-Eagle
Sierra Clark
Third Place  The Ann Arbor News
Sam Dodge