

2021 MPA Better Newspaper Contest



Embargo: Do not release before 3:00 p.m., Thursday, March 17, 2022

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.

Circulation Class	Total Points	News Media Publication
Local	650	Flint Beat
Statewide	1,300	Bridge Michigan

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.

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*

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

Honorable 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

Honorable 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

Honorable 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

Honorable 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

Honorable 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

Honorable Mention **Michigan Advance**

Black lawmakers warned of extremism and white supremacy 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 masked 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