

## **Bridge Michigan Reporter Jonathan Oostling chosen 2021 Richard Milliman Journalist of the Year**

Jonathan Oostling is the 2021 recipient of the Richard Milliman Journalist of the Year Award. The “JOY” award is sponsored by the Michigan Press Association Foundation.

Jonathan was chosen by a panel of four judges representing Michigan media and academia. He will receive a \$1000 prize.

A veteran Capitol reporter, Jonathan’s mastery of Michigan’s government proved invaluable when the state’s election system plunged toward chaos after the November 2020 elections and political extremism tried to go mainstream. In the two months after the election perpetuated persistent falsehoods about voting irregularities, Jonathan was swift and diligent about setting the record straight, writing 63 articles that debunked conspiracy theories from dead people voting, election software glitches, inflated turnout and more. But Jonathan did far more than simply fact-check. His reporting took him to all ends of the state to chronicle the extremism that fueled lies about the election and tell the stories of those brave enough to tell the truth.

“Jonathan is a reporter’s reporter,” said Bridge Michigan Managing Editor Joel Kurth. “His meticulous reporting and encyclopedic knowledge of Michigan politics were never more vital than in the wake of the 2020 election, when he worked tirelessly to fact check fraud claims and explore the shadowy world of extremism.”

“Oostling is an excellent writer and knows how to capture and hold the reader’s interest.” says judge Tom Tolen.

“There’s no topic of greater importance than the integrity of U.S. elections. Many journalists have covered the issue from a national or single state perspective, so it’s easy for the average reader to think the issue has nothing to do with them. But Jonathan Oostling’s determination to tell the story through the eyes of real people, from an Upper Peninsula state legislator and dairy farmer to tiny-town extremists, makes it clear this is a problem close to home.” Said contest judge Sarah Mahoney

Jonathan Oostling grew up in Grand Rapids and earned a bachelor’s degree from Grand Valley State University. Oostling started his professional career as a teacher, an experience that helped him immensely when later required to work with unruly state legislators in Lansing.

He left the classroom and enrolled at Michigan State University to earn a master’s degree in journalism. He was hired by MLive Media Group in 2007 before graduation. He joined The Detroit News in 2016 covering the capitol and joined Bridge Michigan in 2019.

Jonathan lives in Lansing with his wife Sarah, daughter Martha, dog Gus, and his 1992 Volkswagen Cabriolet.

In a virtual awards ceremony via Zoom on March 17, the MPA Foundation also recognized Koby Levin of Chalkbeat as runner up for his series about “pushing the problems facing vulnerable Michigan children to the center for the statewide conversation” and Kristen Jordan Shamus of the Detroit Free Press as runner up for her Covid-19 coverage. They were chosen from a field of entries from broadcast, print and electronic journalists for work from October 2020 thru September 2021. Previous winners of the JOY Award are Michael Wilkinson of Bridge Michigan, Tresa Baldas of the Detroit Free Press, Paula Gardner of MLive, Garret Ellison of MLive, Karen Bouffard and Joel Kurth of the Detroit News, Curt Guyette of the American Civil Liberties Union, and Jennifer Dixon of the Detroit Free Press.

The Michigan Press Association Foundation was created in 1980 to further the interests of community 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 MPA Foundation has invested more than \$300,000 in Michigan

journalism since 1990, including the awarding of nearly 300 scholarships to college-level journalism students and has awarded the Richard Milliman Journalist of the Year to one Michigan journalist each year since 2014.