

2025 Better Newspaper Contest General Information-News Media Individual

Entry Deadline:

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

Friday, October 3, 2025

2025 dues must be paid in full to enter the contest.

**Contest Period:**

August 1, 2024, through July 31, 2025

Contest Site:

Digital files must be uploaded through the contest site, [Michigan Press Association BNC](https://www.newspapercontest.com/Contests/MichiganPressAssociation.aspx)
Full Contest URL <https://www.newspapercontest.com/Contests/MichiganPressAssociation.aspx> or go to the MichiganPress.org site under Events & Training > Contests And Awards Enter Contest.
All URLs, links, and passwords, etc., must be functional. Inability to access the data, the entry will be disqualified.
Photos must be in high-resolution JPG format.

Help: Call Diana's cell at **517-610-4813** or Don at **616-275-0444** 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 all three contests. Contest results will be announced in 2026 at the Annual Convention. Many awards will be presented at the awards ceremony. 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

Entry Fee:

The base fee to enter the contest is \$30 with an additional \$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 completed with all files uploaded, click on "Entry Billing" to pay for your entries. **Do Not pay for your entries until you are completely done entering the contest. Otherwise, you will be paying for all the entries and the base fee again. There is no way to pay for entries separately.** There, you will see a total at the bottom and an option to pay by credit card/PayPal or by check. Payments by credit card are 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 3, 2025, and sent to:

**Michigan Press Association
James Tarrant
1642 Yosemite Dr.
Lansing, MI 48917**

Deadlines:

Work must have been published between August 1, 2024, and July 31, 2025.

*Entries must be uploaded no later than 11:59 p.m., October 3, 2025. ***The deadline will not be extended.****

Contest Circulation Classes (for editorial entries only):

Individual: Individual Members

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 submit entries online: These rules are on the contest website.

BASIC INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1—The Association Code needed to register is **MPA25** (CASE SENSITIVE). Register on the contest website using your email address. You will receive a confirmation email, which you will need to complete registration. Use the link above to register.

Step 2—Login [here](#) (or use the link above). You will see a page showing any entries you have already submitted. Complete rules for College, General (Newspaper), News Media and News Media Individual contests are available above (click links). Some browsers, such as Safari, will open the rules in a new window; others will require you to download the PDF file to your computer.

Step 3—Click on the “Add New Entry” link.

Step 4—On this page, select your newspaper name. A lot of information will autofill. If that information is incorrect, please email bnc@michiganpress.org or call 517-610-4813 or Don at **616-275-0444**. Your Division/Circulation Class will be selected for you based on MPA Assignment. Fill in the preparer’s name.

Step 5—Select the contest class. These are drop-down menus for your convenience. This field will clear each time you save an entry, so you must select a class for each new entry. When you select the class, special instructions will appear below it.

Step 6—If necessary, provide an explanation of your entry. The explanation/cutline box is limited to 3,000 characters. It is a good idea to write your explanation in another program, such as Word, and copy/paste into the explanation box. If a URL is required, fill in the URL box; there is no need to type “http://.”

Step 7—Include the name of the entry. If uploading full-page PDF files, it will be helpful if the entry name matches the headline on the page so the judges can find it easily. If the judges cannot tell what is to be judged, the entry will be discarded without refund. **Remember what you put in here is what appears on the certificate.**

Step 8—Include the name of the person or people who should be credited for any award. This is generally the writer, reporter, photographer, graphic artist, cartoonist, etc. It is not necessarily the name of the person submitting the entry nor the person picking up the award at the awards ceremony. **Remember what you put here is what**

appears on the certificate. Make sure you have something in the credit field, if nothing is there, we will either leave blank or put staff.

Step 9—Add your file or files. You can drag and drop files or use the “Add files” button to navigate your files. Generally, files should be in PDF format except photos, which should be in high-resolution JPG format. Other files and URLs may be acceptable as noted in the special instructions. Upload as many files as are necessary to complete your entry but refer to the special instructions for any limitations.

Step 10—When you have completed your submission, click the “Save” button. If you click the “Back to list” button, you will lose the entry you just completed. After clicking “Save,” you will be directed back to the list of your entries.

Step 11—To submit another entry, click “Add New Entry.” As long as you have not logged out of the system, your newspaper name will still be in place, and you can simply start at **Step 6** again. You may log out and log back in later to continue adding entries. You will need to select your newspaper name each time you log in.

Step 12—If you are done submitting entries, please review the list. You may not change an entry, but you may delete an entry and resubmit it.

NOTE: Please try to keep file sizes under 5mb to aid judges in accessing entry content. For larger files such as Special Sections, options include Dropbox, Google Drive, or any service that lets you “share” files via URL. Please make sure the file is public, or a password is provided and that it can be printed. If a file cannot be easily accessed, it could be skipped over for judging.

IF APPLICABLE: To add digital-only content or audio/video entries, copy and paste the content’s web address into the provided website URL field. To host your content online, either upload it to a free streaming content website (e.g., YouTube) or talk to your IT person about adding it to your website. Make sure the content will be accessible online throughout the contest and awards process.

Here are some examples of free streaming content websites where you can upload audio and video content: Audio: www.kiwi6.com, www.tindeck.com; Video: www.youtube.com.

IMPORTANT: Ensure that items are not behind a paywall or a password-protected area. If they are, you must provide username/password info in the Comments section of your entry. Judges may disqualify your entry if work samples are inaccessible.

How to Enter:

1. Select the 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 37 to 57 can be entered in the Open Categories.
5. Entrants must make sure that the entry they are entering is attributed to the correct newspaper.
6. Entrants must make sure that all the information they are entering for headlines, and credit is what they want on the certificates. The information you enter is what we use for the press releases and certificates.

7. Entrants must make sure that the login is included in all entries and the judges can use the login. Do not include one that the judges must make their own login to paywall. If not clearly identified, the entry will be disqualified.
8. All URLs, links, and passwords, etc., must be functional. Inability to access the data, the entry will be disqualified.
9. When entering the photo categories photos should be in high-resolution JPG format. Do not include a pdf or a URL.
10. Entrants must make sure that all attachments are included in the entry.
11. **NEW:** Everyone who enters the contest will be signed up to be a judge in 2026

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 and under 5 MB. All URLs, links, and passwords, etc., must be functional. Inability to access the data, the entry will be disqualified.

62. 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. **One entry per paper or publication.**

63. 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 is OK if you enter the work in another MPA contest category.

64. 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.

65. Best Photo

Submit your best photo and let the judge select first, second and third place from ANY MPA member publication or website. The entrant must do the work. 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 is OK if you enter the photo in another MPA contest category. The photo should be in high-resolution JPG format.

66. 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. All URLs, links, and passwords, etc., must be functional. Inability to access the data, the entry will be disqualified. 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.

NEW!!! 67. Best Education Beat

To a writer for their best articles on education issues. Judging will be based on news value, writing clarity and style, and depth of reporting. The judge will select a first, second and third place winner from ANY MPA member publication or website based on writing clarity and style. It is OK if you enter the work in another MPA contest category.

NEW!!! 68. Best Newsletter

Submission will be judged on overall narrative quality and value to readers. The best original newsletter produced

by a reporter or editor and distributed to readers via email. Newsletter should contain original work and not be created via automated aggregation. Awards go to the author or authors of the newsletter. Newsletters can be on any topic. Submit up to three examples.

Special Awards, Contests & Instructions

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 2026. The winners will be announced in 2026 at the MPA Annual Convention.

Newspaper of the Year Award

The Newspaper of the Year Award honors the newspaper winning the most points awarded for placing in each editorial class. There will be one award in each of the eight editorial circulation classes. Editorial classes 37-61 count toward the award.

Points are awarded as follows:

First Place 100 points

Second Place 70 points

Third Place 40 points

69. 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 the government.

70. MPA Rookie Writer

Skillful 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 less 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.

71. Public Notice Journalism Award –

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.

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. \$200 prize to the winner, sponsored by Detroit Legal News Publishing.

The winner of this category will automatically be entered into the National Newspaper Association contest for consideration as a national winner.

NEW!!! 72. Reporting on the 2nd Amendment-From gun control to gun rights, firearms are a hot topic in MI. Sadly, we have had more than our fair share of reasons to report on gun violence. The ongoing saga of the Crumley family is a reminder of the worst-case scenario in our state.

On the other hand, we have a thriving hunting industry in this state and a large portion of residents who own and handle their guns responsibly for various reasons.

This category focuses on all aspects of 2nd amendment reporting.

NEW!!! 73. Community Impact Award -This will highlight work in and for the community with testimonials from three community members.

Frequently Asked Questions

These are located on MichiganPress.org site under Events & Training > Contests And Awards Contests FAQs

<https://michiganpress.org/contests-and-awards/>